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*AUTHOR'S EDITION*

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ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

With Preface and Notes  
by the Author, and  
*Photogravure Illustration*

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**THE STARK-MUNRO  
LETTERS *and* ROUND  
THE RED LAMP**

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By <sup>5th</sup> ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

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I L L U S T R A T E D

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## PREFACE TO THE AUTHOR'S EDITION

THERE are two of my books which I should desire to be judged by a different standard and read in a different spirit to the others. These are "The Stark Munro Letters" and "A Duet."

My other works are all stories. These two are not primarily stories, but studies. The reader who approaches them with the expectation of finding a definite plot working toward a crisis is destined to disappointment. I have been blamed for not producing that which I had no wish to produce. My scheme was, in each case, to break away from the conventions of fiction, and to draw, without exaggeration, a series of incidents from real life, selecting them in such a way that they should illustrate the subject which I had chosen for treatment. In this case the subject was the first fight of a modern young man with the material and spiritual difficulties which confront him at the outset of life. There is no claim that his outlook is either profound or original—such an outlook is rare in youth—but it is at least honest and frank, and typical, as I believe, of his class. Taking the whole range of English fiction, it has always appeared to me that the spiritual side of man's character has been strangely neglected. Elaborate and brilliant attempts have been made to draw a young man from the time of Tom Jones to those of Pendennis or of Richard Fernal; but of all this por-

## PREFACE

trait gallery of young men, how many are there who indicate their relation to those eternal problems which are really the touchstone and centre of all character? One learns the smallest details of life and manners, while we are left ignorant of that which is the key both to the one and the other. It would be a gross presumption to suppose that this sketch fills the vacancy ; but at least it points the way on which another may venture with more success. But I repeat that the object of the book is not to tell a story, but to give a faithful rendering of a modern young man with his relations to life.

A. CONAN DOYLE.

UNDERHAW, HINDHEAD.

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# **THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS**

**BEING A SERIES OF SIXTEEN LETTERS WRITTEN BY J. STARK MUNRO, M.B., TO HIS FRIEND AND FORMER FELLOW-STUDENT, HAROLD SWANBOROUGH, OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS, DURING THE YEARS 1881-1884**



# THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

## I

HOME,  
30th March, 1881.

I HAVE missed you very much since your return to America, my dear Harold, for you are the one man to whom I have been able to unreservedly open my whole mind. I don't know why it is; for, now that I come to think of it, I have never enjoyed very much of your confidence in return. But that may be my fault. Perhaps you don't find me sympathetic, even though I have every wish to be. I can only say that I find you intensely so, and perhaps I presume too much upon the fact. But no, every instinct in my nature tells me that I don't bore you by my confidences.

Can you remember Cullingworth at the University? You never were in the athletic set, and so it is possible that you don't. Anyway I'll take it for granted that you don't, and explain it all from the beginning. I'm sure that you would know his photograph, however, for the reason that he was the ugliest and queerest-looking man of our year.

Physically he was a fine athlete—one of the fastest and most determined Rugby forwards that I have ever known, though he played so savage a game that he was never given his international cap. He was well-grown, five foot nine perhaps, with square shoulders, an arching chest, and a quick

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

jerky way of walking. He had a square strong head, bristling with short wiry black hair. His face was wonderfully ugly, but it was the ugliness of character, which is as attractive as beauty. His jaw and eyebrows were craggy and rough-hewn, his nose aggressive and red-shot, his eyes small and near set, light blue in colour, and capable of assuming a very genial and also an exceedingly vindictive expression. A slight wiry moustache covered his upper lip, and his teeth were yellow, strong, and overlapping. Add to this that he seldom wore collar or necktie, that his throat was of the colour and texture of the bark of a Scotch fir, and that he had a voice and especially a laugh like a bull's bellow. Then you have some idea (if you can piece all these items together in your mind) of the outward James Cullingworth.

But the inner man, after all, was what was most worth noting. I don't pretend to know what genius is. Carlyle's definition always seemed to me to be a very crisp and clear statement of what it is *not*. Far from its being an infinite capacity for taking pains, its leading characteristic, as far as I have ever been able to observe it, has been that it allows the possessor of it to attain results by a sort of instinct which other men could only reach by hard work. In this sense Cullingworth was the greatest genius that I have ever known. He never seemed to work, and yet he took the anatomy prize over the heads of all the ten-hour-a-day men. That might not count for much, for he was quite capable of idling ostentatiously all day and then reading desperately all night; but start a subject of your own for him, and then see his originality and strength. Talk about torpedoes



## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

and he would catch up a pencil, and on the back of an old envelope from his pocket he would sketch out some novel contrivance for piercing a ship's netting and getting at her side, which might no doubt involve some technical impossibility, but which would at least be quite plausible and new. Then as he drew, his bristling eyebrows would contract, his small eyes would gleam with excitement, his lips would be pressed together, and he would end by banging on the paper with his open hand, and shouting in his exultation. You would think that his one mission in life was to invent torpedoes. But next instant, if you were to express surprise as to how it was that the Egyptian workmen elevated the stones to the top of the pyramids, out would come the pencil and envelope, and he would propound a scheme for doing that with equal energy and conviction. This ingenuity was joined to an extremely sanguine nature. As he paced up and down in his jerky quick-stepping fashion after one of these flights of invention, he would take out patents for it, receive you as his partner in the enterprise, have it adopted in every civilised country, see all conceivable applications of it, count up his probable royalties, sketch out the novel methods in which he would invest his gains, and finally retire with the most gigantic fortune that has ever been amassed. And you would be swept along by his words, and would be carried every foot of the way with him, so that it would come as quite a shock to you when you suddenly fell back to earth again, and found yourself trudging the city street a poor student, with Kirk's *Physiology* under your arm, and hardly the price of your luncheon in your pocket.

## THE STARK MUNRO-LETTERS

I read over what I have written, but I can see that I give you no real insight into the demoniac cleverness of Cullingworth. His views upon medicine were most revolutionary, but I daresay that if things fulfil their promise I may have a good deal to say about them in the sequel. With his brilliant and unusual gifts, his fine athletic record, his strange way of dressing (his hat on the back of his head and his throat bare), his thundering voice, and his ugly, powerful face, he had quite the most marked individuality of any man that I have ever known.

Now, you will think me very prolix about this man; but, as it looks as if his life might become entwined with mine, it is a subject of immediate interest to me, and I am writing all this for the purpose of reviving my own half faded impressions, as well as in the hope of amusing and interesting you. So I must just give you one or two other points which may make his character more clear to you.

He had a dash of the heroic in him. On one occasion he was placed in such a position that he must choose between compromising a lady, or springing out of a third-floor window. Without a moment's hesitation he hurled himself out of the window. As luck would have it, he fell through a large laurel bush on to a garden plot, which was soft with rain, and so escaped with a shaking and a bruising. If I have to say anything that gives a bad impression of the man, put that upon the other side.

He was fond of rough horse-play; but it was better to avoid it with him, for you could never tell what it might lead to. His temper was noth-

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ing less than infernal. I have seen him in the dissecting-rooms begin to skylark with a fellow, and then in an instant the fun would go out of his face, his little eyes would gleam with fury, and the two would be rolling, worrying each other like dogs, below the table. He would be dragged off, panting and speechless with fury, with his wiry hair bristling straight up like a fighting terrier's.

This pugnacious side of his character would be worthily used sometimes. I remember that an address which was being given to us by an eminent London specialist was much interrupted by a man in the front row, who amused himself by interjecting remarks. The lecturer appealed to his audience at last. "These interruptions are insufferable, gentlemen," said he; "will no one free me from this annoyance?" "Hold your tongue—you, sir, on the front bench," cried Cullingworth, in his bull's bellow. "Perhaps you'll make me," said the fellow, turning a contemptuous face over his shoulder. Cullingworth closed his note-book, and began to walk down on the tops of the desks, to the delight of the three hundred spectators. It was fine to see the deliberate way in which he picked his way among the ink bottles. As he sprang down from the last bench on to the floor, his opponent struck him a smashing blow full in the face. Cullingworth got his bulldog grip on him, however, and rushed him backward out of the class-room. What he did with him I don't know, but there was a noise like the delivery of a ton of coals; and the champion of law and order returned, with the sedate air of a man who had done his work. One of his eyes looked like an over-ripe damson, but we gave him three cheers as he made his way back to his

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seat. Then we went on with the dangers of *Placenta Prævia*.

He was not a man who drank hard, but a little drink would have a very great effect upon him. Then it was that the ideas would surge from his brain, each more fantastic and ingenious than the last. And if ever he did get beyond the borderland he would do the most amazing things. Sometimes it was the fighting instinct that would possess him, sometimes the preaching, sometimes the erotic, and sometimes the comic, or they might come in succession, replacing each other so rapidly as to bewilder his companions. Intoxication brought all kinds of queer little peculiarities with it. One of them was that he could walk or run perfectly straight, but that there always came a time when he unconsciously turned upon his tracks and retraced his steps again. This had a strange effect sometimes, as in the instance which I am about to tell you.

Very sober to outward seeming, but in a frenzy within, he went down to the station one night, and, stooping to the pigeon-hole, he asked the ticket-clerk, in the suavest voice, whether he could tell him how far it was to London. The official put forward his face to reply when Cullingworth drove his fist through the little hole with the force of a piston. The clerk flew backward off his stool, and his yell of pain and indignation brought some police and railway men to his assistance. They pursued Cullingworth; but he, as active and as fit as a greyhound, outraced them all and vanished into the darkness, down the long, straight street. The pursuers had stopped, and were gathered in a knot talking the matter over, when, looking up, they

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saw, to their amazement, the man whom they were after, running at the top of his speed in their direction. His little peculiarity had asserted itself, you see, and he had unconsciously turned in his flight. They tripped him up, flung themselves upon him, and after a long and desperate struggle dragged him to the police station. He was charged before the magistrate next morning, but made such a brilliant speech from the dock in his own defence that he carried the Court with him, and escaped with a nominal fine. At his invitation, the witnesses and the police trooped after him to the nearest hotel, and the affair ended in universal whiskey-and-sodas.

Well, now, if, after all these illustrations, I have failed to give you some notion of the man, able, magnetic, unscrupulous, interesting, many-sided, I must despair of ever doing so. I'll suppose, however, that I have not failed ; and I will proceed to tell you, my most patient of confidants, something of my personal relations with Cullingworth.

When I first made a casual acquaintance with him he was a bachelor. At the end of a long vacation, however, he met me in the street, and told me, in his loud-voiced volcanic shoulder-slapping way, that he had just been married. At his invitation, I went up with him then and there to see his wife ; and as we walked he told me the history of his wedding, which was as extraordinary as everything else he did. I won't tell it to you here, my dear Harold, for I feel that I have dived down too many side streets already ; but it was a most bustling business, in which the locking of a governess into her room and the dyeing of Cullingworth's hair played prominent parts. *Apropos* of the latter he

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was never quite able to get rid of its traces ; and from this time forward there was added to his other peculiarities the fact that when the sunlight struck upon his hair at certain angles, it turned it all iridescent and shimmering.

Well, I went up to his lodgings with him, and was introduced to Mrs. Cullingworth. She was a timid, sweet-faced, grey-eyed woman, quiet-voiced and gentle-mannered. You had only to see the way in which she looked at him to understand that she was absolutely under his control, and that do what he might, or say what he might, it would always be the best thing to her. She could be obstinate, too, in a gentle, dove-like sort of way ; but her obstinacy lay always in the direction of backing up his sayings and doings. This, however, I was only to find out afterward ; and at that, my first visit, she impressed me as being one of the sweetest little women that I had ever met.

They were living in the most singular style, in a suite of four small rooms, over a grocer's shop. There was a kitchen, a bedroom, a sitting-room, and a fourth room, which Cullingworth insisted upon regarding as a most unhealthy apartment and a focus of disease, though I am convinced that it was nothing more than the smell of cheeses from below which had given him the idea. At any rate, with his usual energy he had not only locked the room up, but had gummed varnished paper over all the cracks of the door, to prevent the imaginary contagion from spreading. The furniture was as spare as possible. There were, I remember, only two chairs in the sitting-room ; so that when a guest came (and I think I was the only one) Cullingworth used to squat upon a pile of yearly vol-

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umes of the *British Medical Journal* in the corner. I can see him now levering himself up from his lowly seat, and striding about the room roaring and striking with his hands, while his little wife sat mum in the corner, listening to him with love and admiration in her eyes. What did we care, any one of the three of us, where we sat or how we lived, when youth throbbed hot in our veins, and our souls were all aflame with the possibilities of life? I still look upon those Bohemian evenings, in the bare room amid the smell of the cheese, as being among the happiest that I have known.

I was a frequent visitor to the Cullingworths, for the pleasure that I got was made the sweeter by the pleasure which I hoped that I gave. They knew no one, and desired to know no one; so that socially I seemed to be the only link that bound them to the world. I even ventured to interfere in the details of their little *menage*. Cullingworth had a fad at the time, that all the diseases of civilisation were due to the abandonment of the open-air life of our ancestors, and as a corollary he kept his windows open day and night. As his wife was obviously fragile, and yet would have died before she would have uttered a word of complaint, I took it upon myself to point out to him that the cough from which she suffered was hardly to be cured so long as she spent her life in a draught. He scowled savagely at me for my interference; and I thought we were on the verge of a quarrel, but it blew over, and he became more considerate in the matter of ventilation.

Our evening occupations just about that time were of a most extraordinary character. You are aware that there is a substance, called waxy matter,

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which is deposited in the tissues of the body during the course of certain diseases. What this may be and how it is formed has been a cause for much bickering among pathologists. Cullingworth had strong views upon the subject, holding that the waxy matter was really the same thing as the glycogen which is normally secreted by the liver. But it is one thing to have an idea, and another to be able to prove it. Above all, we wanted some waxy matter with which to experiment. But fortune favoured us in the most magical way. The Professor of Pathology had come into possession of a magnificent specimen of the condition. With pride he exhibited the organ to us in the class-room before ordering his assistant to remove it to the ice-chest, preparatory to its being used for microscopical work in the practical class. Cullingworth saw his chance, and acted on the instant. Slipping out of the class-room, he threw open the ice-chest, rolled his ulster round the dreadful glistening mass, closed the chest again, and walked quietly away. I have no doubt that to this day the disappearance of that waxy liver is one of the most inexplicable mysteries in the career of our Professor.

That evening, and for many evenings to come, we worked upon our liver. For our experiments it was necessary to subject it all to great heat in an endeavour to separate the nitrogenous cellular substance from the non-nitrogenous waxy matter. With our limited appliances the only way we could think of was to cut it into fine pieces and cook it in a frying pan. So night after night the curious spectacle might have been seen of a beautiful young woman and two very earnest young men busily engaged in making these grim fricassees. Nothing



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came of all our work; for though Cullingworth considered that he had absolutely established his case, and wrote long screeds to the medical papers upon the subject, he was never apt at stating his views with his pen, and he left, I am sure, a very confused idea on the minds of his readers as to what it was that he was driving at. Again, as he was a mere student without any letters after his name he got scant attention, and I never heard that he gained over a single supporter.

At the end of the year we both passed our examinations and became duly qualified medical men. The Cullingworths vanished away, and I heard no more of them, for he was a man who prided himself upon never writing a letter. His father had formerly a very large and lucrative practice in the West of Scotland, but he died some years ago. I had a vague idea, founded upon some chance remark of his, that Cullingworth had gone to see whether the family name might still stand him in good stead there. As for me I began, as you will remember that I explained in my last, by acting as assistant in my father's practice. You know, however, that at its best it is not worth more than £500 a year, with no room for expansion. This is not large enough to keep two of us at work. Then, again, there are times when I can see that my religious opinions annoy the old man. On the whole, and for every reason, I think that it would be better if I were out of this. I applied for several steamship lines, and for at least a dozen house surgeonships; but there is as much competition for a miserable post with a hundred a year as if it were the Viceroyship of India. As a rule, I simply get my testimonials returned without any comment,

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which is the sort of thing that teaches a man humility. Of course, it is very pleasant to live with the mater, and my little brother Paul is a regular trump. I am teaching him boxing; and you should see him put his tiny fists up, and counter with his right. He got me under the jaw this evening, and I had to ask for poached eggs for supper.

And all this brings me up to the present time and the latest news. It is that I had a telegram from Cullingworth this morning — after nine months' silence. It was dated from Avonmouth, the town where I had suspected that he had settled, and it said simply, "Come at once. I have urgent need of you. Cullingworth." Of course, I shall go by the first train to-morrow. It may mean anything or nothing. In my heart of hearts I hope that old Cullingworth sees an opening for me either as his partner or in some other way. I always believed that he would turn up trumps, and make my fortune as well as his own. He knows that if I am not very quick or brilliant I am fairly steady and reliable. So that's what I've been working up to all along, Harold, that to-morrow I go to join Cullingworth, and that it looks as if there was to be an opening for me at last. I gave you a sketch of him and his ways, so that you may take an interest in the development of my fortune, which you could not do if you did not know something of the man who is holding out his hand to me.

Yesterday was my birthday, and I was two and twenty years of age. For two and twenty years have I swung around the sun. And in all seriousness, without a touch of levity, and from the bottom of my soul, I assure you that I have at the present moment the very vaguest idea as to whence

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

I have come from, whither I am going, or what I am here for. It is not for want of inquiry, or from indifference. I have mastered the principles of several religions. They have all shocked me by the violence which I should have to do to my reason to accept the dogmas of any one of them. Their ethics are usually excellent. So are the ethics of the common law of England. But the scheme of creation upon which those ethics are built! Well, it really is to me the most astonishing thing that I have seen in my short earthly pilgrimage, that so many able men, deep philosophers, astute lawyers, and clear-headed men of the world should accept such an explanation of the facts of life. In the face of their apparent concurrence my own poor little opinion would not dare to do more than lurk at the back of my soul, were it not that I take courage when I reflect that the equally eminent lawyers and philosophers of Rome and Greece were all agreed that Jupiter had numerous wives and was fond of a glass of good wine.

Mind, my dear Harold, I do not wish to run down your view or that of any other man. We who claim toleration should be the first to extend it to others. I am only indicating my own position, as I have often done before. And I know your reply so well. Can't I hear your grave voice saying "Have faith!" Your conscience allows you to. Well, mine won't allow me. I see so clearly that faith is not a virtue, but a vice. It is a goat which has been herded with the sheep. If a man deliberately shut his physical eyes and refused to use them, you would be as quick as any one in seeing that it was immoral and a treason to Nature. And yet you would counsel a man to

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shut that far more precious gift, the reason, and to refuse to use it in the most intimate question of life.

"The reason cannot help in such a matter," you reply. I answer that to say so is to give up a battle before it is fought. My reason *shall* help me, and when it can help no longer I shall do without help.

It's late, Harold, and the fire's out, and I'm shivering; and you, I'm very sure, are heartily weary of my gossip and my heresies, so adieu until my next.

## II

HOME,  
10th April, 1881.

WELL, my dear Harold, here I am again in your postbox. It's not a fortnight since I wrote you that great long letter, and yet you see I have news enough to make another formidable budget. They say that the art of letter-writing has been lost ; but if quantity may atone for quality, you must confess that (for your sins) you have a friend who has retained it.

When I wrote to you last I was on the eve of going down to join the Cullingworths at Avonmouth, with every hope that he had found some opening for me. I must tell you at some length the particulars of that expedition.

I travelled down part of the way with young Leslie Duncan, whom I think you know. He was gracious enough to consider that a third-class carriage and my company were to be preferred to a first class with solitude. You know that he came into his uncle's money a little time ago, and after a first delirious outbreak, he has now relapsed into that dead heavy state of despair which is caused by having everything which one can wish for. How absurd are the ambitions of life when I think that I, who am fairly happy and as keen as a razor edge, should be struggling for that which I can see has brought neither profit nor happiness to him ! And yet, if I can read my own nature, it is not the accumulation of money which is my real aim, but only that I may acquire so much as will relieve my

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mind of sordid cares and enable me to develop any gifts which I may have, undisturbed. My tastes are so simple that I cannot imagine any advantage which wealth can give—save indeed the pleasure of helping a good man or a good cause. Why should people ever take credit for charity when they must know that they cannot gain as much pleasure out of their guineas in any other fashion? As an example I gave my watch to a broken schoolmaster the other day (having no change in my pocket), and the matter could not quite determine whether it was a trait of madness or of nobility. I could have told her with absolute confidence that it was neither the one nor the other, but a sort of epicurean selfishness with perhaps a little dash of swagger away down at the bottom of it. What had I ever had from my chronometer like the quiet thrill of satisfaction when the fellow brought me the pawn ticket and told me that the thirty shillings had been useful?

Leslie Duncan got out at Carstairs, and I was left alone with a hale, white-haired, old Roman Catholic priest, who had sat quietly reading his office in the corner. We fell into the most intimate talk, which lasted all the way to Avonmouth—indeed, so interested was I that I very nearly passed through the place without knowing it. Father Logan (for that was his name) seemed to me to be a beautiful type of what a priest should be,—self-sacrificing and pure-minded, with a kind of simple cunning about him, and a deal of innocent fun. He had the defects as well as the virtues of his class, for he was absolutely reactionary in his views. We discussed religion with fervour, and his theology was somewhere about the Early Pliocene. He

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might have chatted the matter over with a priest of Charlemagne's Court, and they would have shaken hands after every sentence. He would acknowledge this and claim it as a merit. It was consistency in his eyes. If our astronomers and inventors and law-givers had been equally consistent where would modern civilisation be? Is religion the only domain of thought which is non-progressive, and to be referred for ever to a standard set two thousand years ago? Can they not see that as the human brain evolves it must take a wider outlook? A half-formed brain makes a half-formed God, and who shall say that our brains are even half-formed yet? The truly inspired priest is the man or woman with the big brain. It is not the shaven patch on the outside, but it is the sixty ounces within which is the real mark of election.

You know that you are turning up your nose at me, Harold. I can see you do it. But I'll come off the thin ice, and you shall have nothing but facts now. I'm afraid that I should never do for a story-teller, for the first stray character that comes along puts his arm in mine and walks me off, with my poor story straggling away to nothing behind me.

Well, then, it was night when we reached Avonmouth, and as I popped my head out of the carriage window, the first thing that my eyes rested upon was Cullingworth, standing in the circle of light under a gas-lamp. His frock coat was flying open, his waistcoat unbuttoned at the top, and his hat (a top hat this time) jammed on the back of his head, with his bristling hair spurting out in front of it. In every way, save that he wore a collar, he was the same Cullingworth as ever. He gave a

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roar of recognition when he saw me, hustled me out of my carriage, seized my carpet bag, or grip-sack as you used to call it, and a minute later we were striding along together through the streets.

I was, as you may imagine, all in a tingle to know what it was that he wanted with me. However, as he made no allusion to it, I did not care to ask, and, during our longish walk, we talked about indifferent matters. It was football first, I remember, whether Richmond had a chance against Blackheath, and the way in which the new passing game was shredding the old scrimmages. Then he got on to inventions, and became so excited that he had to give me back my bag in order that he might be able to slap all his points home with his fist upon his palm. I can see him now stopping, with his face leaning forward and his yellow tusks gleaming in the lamp-light.

“My dear Munro” (this was the style of the thing), “why was armour abandoned, eh? What! I’ll tell you why. It was because the weight of metal that would protect a man who was standing up was more than he could carry. But battles are not fought now-a-days by men who are standing up. Your infantry are all lying on their stomachs, and it would take very little to protect them. And steel has improved, Munro! Chilled steel! Bessemer! Bessemer! Very good. How much to cover a man? Fourteen inches by twelve, meeting at an angle so that the bullet will glance. A notch at one side for the rifle. There you have it, laddie,—the Cullingworth patent portable bullet-proof shield! Weight? Oh, the weight would be sixteen pounds. I worked it out. Each company carries its shields in go-carts, and they are served



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out on going into action. Give me twenty thousand good shots, and I'll go in at Calais and come out at Pekin. Think of it, my boy! the moral effect. One side gets home every time and the other plasters its bullets up against steel plates. No troops would stand it. The nation that gets it first will pitchfork the rest of Europe over the edge. They're bound to have it—all of them. Let's reckon it out. There's about eight million of them on a war footing. Let us suppose that only half of them have it. I say only half, because I don't want to be too sanguine. That's four million, and I should take a royalty of four shillings on wholesale orders. What's that, Munro? About three-quarters of a million sterling, eh? How's that, laddie, eh? What?"

Really, that is not unlike his style of talk, now that I come to read it over, only you miss the queer stops, the sudden confidential whispers, the roar with which he triumphantly answered his own questions, the shrugs and slaps, and gesticulations. But not a word all the time as to what it was that made him send me that urgent wire which brought me to Avonmouth.

I had, of course, been puzzling in my mind as to whether he had succeeded or not, though from his cheerful appearance and buoyant talk, it was tolerably clear to me that all was well with him. I was, however, surprised when, as we walked along a quiet, curving avenue, with great houses standing in their own grounds upon either side, he stopped and turned in through the iron gate which led up to one of the finest of them. The moon had broken out and shone upon the high-peaked roof, and upon the gables at each corner. When he knocked it

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was opened by a footman with red plush knee-breeches. I began to perceive that my friend's success must have been something colossal.

When we came down to the dining-room for supper, Mrs. Cullingworth was waiting there to greet me. I was sorry to see that she was pale and weary-looking. However, we had a merry meal in the old style, and her husband's animation reflected itself upon her face, until at last we might have been back in the little room, where the *Medical Journals* served as a chair, instead of in the great oak-furnished, picture-hung chamber to which we had been promoted. All the time, however, not one word as to the object of my journey.

When the supper was finished, Cullingworth led the way into a small sitting-room, where we both lit our pipes, and Mrs. Cullingworth her cigarette. He sat for some little time in silence, and then bounding up rushed to the door and flung it open. It is one of his strange peculiarities to think that people are eavesdropping or conspiring against him; for, in spite of his superficial brusqueness and frankness, a strange vein of suspicion runs through his singular and complex nature. Having satisfied himself now that there were no spies or listeners he threw himself down into his armchair.

"Munro," said he, prodding at me with his pipe, "what I wanted to tell you is, that I am utterly, hopelessly, and irretrievably ruined."

My chair was tilted on its back legs as he spoke, and I assure you that I was within an ace of going over. Down like a pack of cards came all my dreams as to the grand results which were to spring from my journey to Avonmouth. Yes, Harold, I am bound to confess it: my first thought was of my

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own disappointment, and my second of the misfortune of my friends. He had the most diabolical intuitions, or I a very tell-tale face, for he added at once—

“Sorry to disappoint you, my boy. That’s not what you expected to hear; I can see.”

“Well,” I stammered, “it *is* rather a surprise, old chap. I thought from the . . . from the . . .”

“From the house, and the footman, and the furniture,” said he. “Well, they’ve eaten me up among them . . . licked me clean, bones and gravy. I’m done for, my boy, unless . . .”—here I saw a question in his eyes—“unless some friend were to lend me his name on a bit of stamped paper.”

“I can’t do it, Cullingworth,” said I. “It’s a wretched thing to have to refuse a friend; and if I had money . . .”

“Wait till you’re asked, Munro,” he interrupted, with his ugliest of expressions. “Besides, as you have nothing and no prospects, what earthly use would *your* name on a paper be?”

“That’s what I want to know,” said I, feeling a little mortified, none the less.

“Look here, laddie,” he went on; “d’you see that pile of letters on the left of the table?”

“Yes.”

“Those are duns. And d’you see those documents on the right? Well, those are County Court summonses. And, now, d’you see that;” he picked up a little ledger, and showed me three or four names scribbled on the first page.

“That’s the practice,” he roared, and laughed until the great veins jumped out on his forehead. His wife laughed heartily also, just as she would have wept, had he been so disposed.

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"It's this way, Munro," said he, when he had got over his paroxysm. "You have probably heard—in fact, I have told you myself—that my father had the finest practice in Scotland. So far as I could judge he was a man of no capacity, but still there you are—he had it."

I nodded and smoked.

"Well, he's been dead seven years, and fifty nets dipping into his little fish-pond. However, when I passed I thought my best move was to come down to the old place, and see whether I couldn't piece the thing together again. The name ought to be worth something, I thought. But it was no use doing the thing in a half-hearted way. Not a bit of use in that, Munro. The kind of people who came to him were wealthy, and must see a fine house and a man in livery. What chance was there of gathering them into a bow-windowed forty-pound-a-year house with a grubby-faced maid at the door? What do you suppose I did? My boy, I took the governor's old house, that was unlet—the very house that he kept up at five thousand a year. Off I started in rare style, and sank my last cent in furniture. But it's no use, laddie. I can't hold on any longer. I got two accidents and an epileptic—twenty-two pounds, eight and sixpence—that's the lot!"

"What will you do, then?"

"That's what I wanted your advice about. That's why I wired for you. I always respected your opinion, my boy, and I thought that now was the time to have it."

It struck me that if he had asked for it nine months before there would have been more sense in it. What on earth could I do when affairs were


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in such a tangle? However, I could not help feeling complimented when so independent a fellow as Cullingworth turned to me in this way.

"You really think," said I, "that it is no use holding on here?"

He jumped up, and began pacing the room in his swift jerky way.

"You take warning from it, Munro," said he. "You've got to start yet. Take my tip, and go where no one knows you. People will trust a stranger quick enough; but if they can remember you as a little chap who ran about in knickerbockers, and got spanked with a hair brush for stealing plums, they are not going to put their lives in your keeping. It's all very well to talk about friendship and family connections; but when a man has a pain in his stomach he doesn't care a toss about all that. I'd stick it up in gold letters in every medical class-room—have it carved across the gate of the University—that if a man wants friends he must go among strangers. It's all up here, Munro; so there's no use in advising me to hold on."



I asked him how much he owed. It came to about seven hundred pounds. The rent alone was two hundred. He had already raised money on the furniture, and his whole assets came to less than a tanner. Of course, there was only one possible thing that I could advise.

"You must call your creditors together," said I; "they can see for themselves that you are young and energetic—sure to succeed sooner or later. If they push you into a corner now, they can get nothing. Make that clear to them. But if you make a fresh start elsewhere and succeed, you

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may pay them all in full. I see no other possible way out of it."

"I knew that you'd say that, and it's just what I thought myself. Isn't it, Hetty? Well, then, that settles it; and I am much obliged to you for your advice, and that's all we'll say about the matter to-night. I've made my shot and missed. Next time I shall hit, and it won't be long either."

His failure did not seem to weigh very heavily on his mind, for in a few minutes he was shouting away as lustily as ever. Whiskey and hot water were brought in, that we might all drink luck to the second venture.

And this whiskey led us to what might have been a troublesome affair. Cullingworth, who had drunk off a couple of glasses, waited until his wife had left the room, and then began to talk of the difficulty of getting any exercise now that he had to wait in all day in the hope of patients. This led us round to the ways in which a man might take his exercise indoors, and that to boxing. Cullingworth took a couple of pairs of gloves out of a cupboard, and proposed that we should fight a round or two then and there.

If I hadn't been a fool, Harold, I should never have consented. It's one of my many weaknesses, that anything like a challenge sets me off. But I knew Cullingworth's ways, and I told you in my last what a lamb of a temper he has. None the less, we pushed back the table, put the lamp on a high bracket, and stood up to one another.

The moment I looked him in the face I smelled mischief. He had a gleam of settled malice in his eye. I believe it was my refusal to back his paper which was running in his head. Anyway he looked

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as dangerous as he could look, with his scowling face sunk forward a little, his hands down near his hips (for his boxing, like everything else about him, is unconventional), and his jaw set like a rat-trap.

I led off, and then in he came hitting with both hands, and grunting like a pig at every blow. From what I could see of him he was no boxer at all, but just a formidable rough and tumble fighter. I was guarding with both hands for half a minute, and then was rushed clean off my legs and banged up against the door, with my head nearly through one of the panels. He wouldn't stop then, though he saw that I had no space to get my elbows back; and he let fly a right-hander which would have put me into the hall, if I hadn't slipped it and got back to the middle of the room.

"Look here, Cullingworth," said I; "there's not much boxing about this game."

"Yes, I hit pretty hard, don't I?"

"If you come boring into me like that, I'm bound to hit you out again," I said. "I want to play light if you'll let me."

The words were not out of my mouth before he was on me like a flash. I slipped him again; but the room was so small, and he as active as a cat, that there was no getting away from him. He was on me once more with a regular football rush that knocked me off my balance. Before I knew where I was he got his left on the mark and his right on my ear. I tripped over a footstool, and then before I could get my balance he had me on the same ear again, and my head was singing like a tea-kettle. He was as pleased as possible with himself, blowing out his chest and slapping it with

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his palms as he took his place in the middle of the room.

"Say when you've had enough, Munro," said he.

This was pretty stiff, considering that I had two inches the better of him in height, and as many stone in weight, besides being the better boxer. His energy and the size of the room had been against me so far, but he wasn't to have all the slogging to himself in the next round if I could help it.

In he came with one of his windmill rushes. But I was on the look-out for him this time. I landed him with my left a regular nose-ender as he came, and then, ducking under his left, I got him a cross-counter on the jaw that laid him flat across his own hearthrug. He was up in an instant, with a face like a madman.

"You swine!" he shouted. "Take those gloves off, and put your hands up!" He was tugging at his own to get them off.

"Go on, you silly ass!" said I. "What is there to fight about?"

He was mad with passion, and chucked his gloves down under the table.

"By God, Munro," he cried, "if you don't take those gloves off, I'll go for you, whether you have them on or not."

"Have a glass of soda water," said I.

He made a crack at me. "You're afraid of me, Munro. That's what's the matter with you," he snarled.

This was getting too hot, Harold. I saw all the folly of the thing. I believed that I might lick him; but at the same time I knew that we were



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so much of a match that we would both get pretty badly cut up without any possible object to serve. For all that, I took my gloves off, and I think perhaps it was the wisest course after all. If Cullingworth once thought he had the whiphand of you, you might be sorry for it afterward.

But, as fate would have it, our little barney was nipped in the bud. Mrs. Cullingworth came into the room at that instant, and screamed out when she saw her husband. His nose was bleeding and his chin was all slobbered with blood, so that I don't wonder that it gave her a turn.

"James!" she screamed; and then to me: "What is the meaning of this, Mr. Munro?"

You should have seen the hatred in her dove's eyes. I felt an insane impulse to pick her up and kiss her.

"We've only been having a little spar, Mrs. Cullingworth," said I. "Your husband was complaining that he never got any exercise."

"It's all right, Hetty," said he, pulling his coat on again. "Don't be a little stupid. Are the servants gone to bed? Well, you might bring some water in a basin from the kitchen. Sit down, Munro, and light your pipe again. I have a hundred things that I want to talk to you about."

So that was the end of it, and all went smoothly for the rest of the evening. But, for all that, the little wife will always look upon me as a brute and a bully; while as to Cullingworth—well, it's rather difficult to say what Cullingworth thinks about the matter.

When I woke next morning he was in my room, and a funny looking object he was. His dressing-gown lay on a chair, and he was putting up a fifty-

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six pound dumb-bell, without a rag to cover him. Nature didn't give him a very symmetrical face, nor the sweetest of expressions; but he has a figure like a Greek statue. I was amused to see that both his eyes had a touch of shadow to them. It was his turn to grin when I sat up and found that my ear was about the shape and consistence of a toad-stool. However, he was all for peace that morning, and chatted away in the most amiable manner possible.

I was to go back to my father's that day, but I had a couple of hours with Cullingworth in his consulting room before I left. He was in his best form, and full of a hundred fantastic schemes, by which I was to help him. His great object was to get his name into the newspapers. That was the basis of all success, according to his views. It seemed to me that he was confounding cause with effect; but I did not argue the point. I laughed until my sides ached over the grotesque suggestions which poured from him. I was to lie senseless in the roadway, and to be carried into him by a sympathising crowd, while the footman ran with a paragraph to the newspapers. But there was the likelihood that the crowd might carry me in to the rival practitioner opposite. In various disguises I was to feign fits at his very door, and so furnish fresh copy for the local press. Then I was to die—absolutely to expire—and all Scotland was to resound with how Dr. Cullingworth, of Avonmouth, had resuscitated me. His ingenious brain rang a thousand changes out of the idea, and his own impending bankruptcy was crowded right out of his thoughts by the flood of half serious devices.

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But the thing that took the fun out of him, and made him gnash his teeth, and stride cursing about the room, was to see a patient walking up the steps which led to the door of Scarsdale, his opposite neighbour. Scarsdale had a fairly busy practice, and received his people at home from ten to twelve, so that I got quite used to seeing Cullingworth fly out of his chair, and rush raving to the window. He would diagnose the cases, too, and estimate their money value until he was hardly articulate.

"There you are!" he would suddenly yell; "see that man with a limp! Every morning he goes. Displaced semilunar cartilage, and a three months' job. The man's worth thirty-five shillings a week. And there! I'm hanged if the woman with the rheumatic arthritis isn't round in her bath-chair again. She's all sealskin and lactic acid. It's simply sickening to see how they crowd to that man. And such a man! You haven't seen him. All the better for you. I don't know what the devil you are laughing at, Munro. I can't see where the fun comes in myself."

Well, it was a short experience that visit to Avonmouth, but I think that I shall remember it all my life. Goodness knows, you must be sick enough of the subject, but when I started with so much detail I was tempted to go on. It ended by my going back again in the afternoon, Cullingworth assuring me that he would call his creditors together as I had advised, and that he would let me know the result in a few days. Mrs. C. would hardly shake hands with me when I said good-bye; but I like her the better for that. He must have a great deal of good in him, or he could not have won her love and confidence so completely. Perhaps there

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is another Cullingworth behind the scenes—a softer, tenderer man, who can love and invite love. If there is, I have never got near him. And yet I may only have been tapping at the shell. Who knows? For that matter, it is likely enough that he has never got at the real Johnnie Munro. But you have, Harold; and I think that you've had a little too much of him this time, only you encourage me to this sort of excess by your sympathetic replies. Well, I've done as much as the General Post Office will carry for fivepence, so I'll conclude by merely remarking that a fortnight has passed, and that I have had no news from Avonmouth, which does not in the very slightest degree surprise me. If I ever do hear anything, which is exceedingly doubtful, you may be sure that I will put a finish to this long story.

### III

HOME,  
15th October, 1881.

WITHOUT any figure of speech I feel quite ashamed when I think of you, Harold. I send you one or two enormously long letters, burdened, as far as I can remember them, with all sorts of useless detail. Then, in spite of your kindly answers and your sympathy, which I have done so little to deserve, I drop you completely for more than six months. By this J pen I swear that it shall not happen again; and this letter may serve to bridge the gap and to bring you up to date in my poor affairs, in which, of all outer mankind, you alone take an interest.

To commence with what is of most moment, you may rest assured that what you said in your last letter about religion has had my most earnest attention. I am sorry that I have not got it by me to refer to (I lent it to Charlie), but I think I have the contents in my head. It is notorious, as you say, that an unbeliever may be as bigoted as any of the orthodox, and that a man may be very dogmatic in his opposition to dogma. Such men are the real enemies of free thought. If anything could persuade me to turn traitor to my reason, it would, for example, be the blasphemous and foolish pictures displayed in some of the agnostic journals.

But every movement has its crowd of camp-followers, who straggle and scatter. We are like a comet, bright at the head but tailing away into mere gas behind. However, every man may speak

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for himself, and I do not feel that your charge comes home to me. I am only bigoted against bigotry, and that I hold to be as legitimate as violence to the violent. When one considers what effect the perversion of the religious instinct has had during the history of the world; the bitter wars, Christian and Mahomedan, Catholic and Protestant; the persecutions, the torturings, the domestic hatreds, the petty spites, with *all* creeds equally blood-guilty, one cannot but be amazed that the concurrent voice of mankind has not placed bigotry at the very head of the deadly sins. It is surely a truism to say that neither smallpox nor the plague has brought the same misery upon mankind.

I cannot be bigoted, my dear boy, when I say from the bottom of my heart that I respect every good Catholic and every good Protestant, and that I recognise that each of these forms of faith has been a powerful instrument for good in the hands of that inscrutable Providence which rules all things. Just as in the course of history one finds that the most far-reaching and admirable effects may proceed from a crime; so in religion, although a creed be founded upon an entirely inadequate conception of the Creator and His ways, it may none the less be the very best practical thing for the people and age which have adopted it. But if it is right for those to whom it is intellectually satisfying to adopt it, it is equally so for those to whom it is not, to protest against it, until by this process the whole mass of mankind gets gradually leavened, and pushed a little bit further upon their slow upward journey.

Catholicism is the more thorough. Protestantism is the more reasonable. Protestantism adapts

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itself to modern civilisation. Catholicism expects civilisation to adapt itself to it. Folk climb from the one big branch to the other big branch, and think they have made a prodigious change, when the main trunk is rotten beneath them, and both must in their present forms be involved sooner or later in a common ruin. The movement of human thought, though slow, is still in the direction of truth, and the various religions which man sheds as he advances (each admirable in its day) will serve, like buoys dropped down from a sailing vessel, to give the rate and direction of his progress.

But how do I know what is truth, you ask? I don't. But I know particularly well what isn't. And surely that is something to have gained. It isn't true that the great central Mind that planned all things is capable of jealousy or of revenge, or of cruelty or of injustice. These are human attributes; and the book which ascribes them to the Infinite must be human also. It isn't true that the laws of Nature have been capriciously disturbed, that snakes have talked, that women have been turned to salt, that rods have brought water out of rocks. You must in honesty confess that if these things were presented to us when we were adults for the first time, we should smile at them. It isn't true that the Fountain of all common sense should punish a race for a venial offence committed by a person long since dead, and then should add to the crass injustice by heaping the whole retribution upon a single innocent scapegoat. Can you not see all the want of justice and logic, to say nothing of the want of mercy, involved in such a conception? Can you not see it, Harold? How can you blind yourself to it? Take your eyes away

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from the details for a moment, and look at this root idea of the predominant Faith. Is the general conception of it consistent with infinite wisdom and mercy? If not, what becomes of the dogmas, the sacraments, the whole scheme which is founded upon this sand-bank? Courage, my friend! At the right moment all will be laid aside, as the man whose strength increases lays down the crutch which has been a good friend to him in his weakness. But his changes won't be over then. His hobble will become a walk, and his walk a run. There is no finality—*can* be none since the question concerns the infinite. All this, which appears too advanced to you to-day, will seem reactionary and conservative a hundred years hence.

Since I am upon this topic, may I say just a little more without boring you? You say that criticism such as mine is merely destructive, and that I have nothing to offer in place of what I pull down. This is not quite correct. I think that there are certain elemental truths within our grasp which ask for no faith for their acceptance, and which are sufficient to furnish us with a practical religion, having so much of reason in it that it would draw thinking men into its fold, not drive them forth from it.

When we all get back to these elemental and provable facts there will be some hopes of ending the petty bickerings of creeds, and of including the whole human family in one comprehensive system of thought.

When first I came out of the faith in which I had been reared, I certainly did feel for a time as if my life-belt had burst. I won't exaggerate and say that I was miserable and plunged in utter spiritual darkness. Youth is too full of action for that.



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But I was conscious of a vague unrest, of a constant want of repose, of an emptiness and hardness which I had not noticed in life before. I had so identified religion with the Bible that I could not conceive them apart. When the foundation proved false, the whole structure came rattling about my ears. And then good old Carlyle came to the rescue; and partly from him, and partly from my own broodings, I made a little hut of my own, which has kept me snug ever since, and has even served to shelter a friend or two besides.

The first and main thing was to get it thoroughly soaked into one that the existence of a Creator and an indication of His attributes does in no way depend upon Jewish poets, nor upon human paper or printing ink. On the contrary, all such efforts to realise Him must only belittle Him, bringing the Infinite down to the narrow terms of human thought, at a time when that thought was in the main less spiritual than it is at present. Even the most material of modern minds would flinch at depicting the Deity as ordering wholesale executions, and hacking kings to pieces upon the horns of altars.

. Then having prepared your mind for a higher (if perhaps a vaguer) idea of the Deity, proceed to study Him in His works, which cannot be counterfeited or manipulated. Nature is the true revelation of the Deity to man. The nearest green field is the inspired page from which you may read all that it is needful for you to know.

I confess that I have never been able to understand the position of the atheist. In fact, I have come to disbelieve in his existence, and to look upon the word as a mere term of theological re-

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proach. It may represent a temporary condition, a passing mental phase, a defiant reaction against an anthropomorphic ideal; but I cannot conceive that any man can continue to survey Nature and to deny that there are laws at work which display intelligence and power. The very existence of a world carries with it the proof of a world-maker, as the table guarantees the pre-existence of the carpenter. Granting this, one may form what conception one will of that Maker, but one cannot be an atheist.

Wisdom and power and means directed to an end run all through the scheme of Nature. What proof do we want, then, from a book? If the man who observes the myriad stars, and considers that they and their innumerable satellites move in their serene dignity through the heavens, each swinging clear of the other's orbit—if, I say, the man who sees this cannot realise the Creator's attributes without the help of the book of Job, then his view of things is beyond my understanding. Nor is it only in the large things that we see the ever present solicitude of some intelligent force. Nothing is too tiny for that fostering care. We see the minute proboscis of the insect carefully adjusted to fit into the calyx of the flower, the most microscopic hair and gland each with its definite purposeful function to perform. What matter whether these came by special creation or by evolution? We know as a matter of fact that they came by evolution, but that only defines the law. It does not explain it.

But if this power has cared for the bee so as to furnish it with its honey-bag and its collecting forceps, and for the lowly seed so as to have a thou-

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sand devices by which it reaches a congenial soil, then is it conceivable that we, the highest product of all, are overlooked? It is *not* conceivable. The idea is inconsistent with the scheme of creation as we see it. I say again that no faith is needed to attain the certainty of a most watchful Providence.

And with this certainty surely we have all that is necessary for an elemental religion. Come what may after death, our duties lie clearly defined before us in this life; and the ethical standard of all creeds agrees so far that there is not likely to be any difference of opinion as to that. The last reformation simplified Catholicism. The coming one will simplify Protestantism. And when the world is ripe for it another will come and simplify that. The ever improving brain will give us an ever broadening creed. Is it not glorious to think that evolution is still living and acting—that if we have an anthropoid ape as an ancestor, we may have archangels for our posterity?

Well, I really never intended to inflict all this upon you, Harold. I thought I could have made my position clear in a page or so. But you can see how one point has brought up another. Even now I am leaving so much unsaid. I can see with such certainty exactly what you will say. "If you deduce a good Providence from the good things in nature, what do you make of the evil?" That's what you will say. Suffice it that I am inclined to deny the existence of evil. Not another word will I say upon the subject; but if you come back to it yourself, then be it on your own head.

You remember that when I wrote last I had just returned from visiting the Cullingworths at Avonmouth, and that he had promised to let me

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know what steps he took in appeasing his creditors. As I expected, I have not had one word from him since. But in a roundabout way I did get some news as to what happened. From this account, which was second-hand, and may have been exaggerated, Cullingworth did exactly what I had recommended, and calling all his creditors together he made them a long statement as to his position. The good people were so touched by the picture that he drew of a worthy man fighting against adversity that several of them wept, and there was not only complete unanimity as to letting their bills stand over, but even some talk of a collection then and there to help Cullingworth on his way. He has, I understand, left Avonmouth, but no one has any idea what has become of him. It is generally supposed that he has gone to England. He is a strange fellow, but I wish him luck wherever he goes.

When I came back I settled down once more to the routine of my father's practice, holding on there until something may turn up. And for six months I have had to wait; a weary six months they have been. You see I cannot ask my father for money—or, at least, I cannot bring myself to take an unnecessary penny of his money—for I know how hard a fight it is with him to keep the roof over our heads and pay for the modest little horse and trap which are as necessary to his trade as a goose is to a tailor. Foul fare the grasping taxman who wrings a couple of guineas from us on the plea that it is a luxury! We can just hold on, and I would not have him a pound the poorer for me. But you can understand, Harold, that it is humiliating for a man of my age to have to go about without any

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money in my pocket. It affects me in so many petty ways. A poor man may do me a kindness, and I have to seem mean in his eyes. I may want a flower for a girl, and must be content to appear ungallant. I don't know why I should be ashamed of this, since it is no fault of mine, and I hope that I don't show it to any one else that I *am* ashamed of it; but to you, my dear Harold, I don't mind confessing that it hurts my self-respect terribly.

I have often wondered why some of those writing fellows don't try their hands at drawing the inner life of a young man from about the age of puberty until he begins to find his feet a little. Men are very fond of analysing the feelings of their heroines, which they cannot possibly know anything about, while they have little to say of the inner development of their heroes, which is an experience which they have themselves undergone. I should like to try it myself, but it would need blending with fiction, and I never had a spark of imagination. But I have a vivid recollection of what I went through myself. At the time I thought (as everybody thinks) that it was a unique experience; but since I have heard the confidences of my father's patients I am convinced that it is the common lot. The shrinking, horrible shyness, alternating with occasional absurd fits of audacity which represent the reaction against it, the longing for close friendship, the agonies over imaginary slights, the extraordinary sexual doubts, the deadly fears caused by non-existent diseases, the vague emotion produced by all women, and the half-frightened thrill by particular ones, the aggressiveness caused by fear of being afraid, the sudden blacknesses, the profound self-distrust—I dare bet

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that you have felt every one of them, Harold, just as I have, and that the first lad of eighteen whom you see out of your window is suffering from them now.

This is all a digression, however, from the fact that I have been six months at home and am weary of it, and pleased at the new development of which I shall have to tell you. The practice here, although unremunerative, is very busy with its three-and-sixpenny visits and guinea confinements, so that both the governor and I have had plenty to do. You know how I admire him, and yet I fear there is little intellectual sympathy between us. He appears to think that those opinions of mine upon religion and politics which come hot from my inmost soul have been assumed either out of indifference or bravado. So I have ceased to talk on vital subjects with him, and, though we affect to ignore it, we both know that there is a barrier there. Now, with my mother—ah, but my mother must have a paragraph to herself.

You met her, Harold! You must remember her sweet face, her sensitive mouth, her peering, short-sighted eyes, her general suggestion of a plump little hen, who is still on the alert about her chickens. But you cannot realise all that she is to me in our domestic life. Those helpful fingers! That sympathetic brain! Ever since I can remember her she has been the quaintest mixture of the house-wife and the woman of letters, with the high-bred spirited lady as a basis for either character. Always a lady, whether she was bargaining with the butcher, or breaking in a skittish charwoman, or stirring the porridge, which I can see her doing with the porridge-stick in one hand, and the other

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holding her *Revue des deux Mondes* within two inches of her dear nose. That was always her favourite reading, and I can never think of her without the association of its brown-yellow cover.

She is a very well-read woman is the mother; she keeps up to date in French literature as well as in English, and can talk by the hour about the Goncourts, and Flaubert, and Gautier. Yet she is always hard at work; and how she imbibes all her knowledge is a mystery. She reads when she knits, she reads when she scrubs, she even reads when she feeds her babies. We have a little joke against her, that at an interesting passage she deposited a spoonful of rusk and milk into my little sister's ear-hole, the child having turned her head at the critical instant. Her hands are worn with work, and yet where is the idle woman who has read as much?

Then, there is her family pride. That is a very vital portion of the mother. You know how little I think of such things. If the Esquire were to be snipped once and for ever from the tail of my name I should be the lighter for it. But, *ma foi!*—to use her own favourite expletive—it would not do to say this to her. On the Pakenham side (she is a Pakenham) the family can boast of some fairly good men—I mean on the direct line—but when we get on the side branches there is not a monarch upon earth who does not roost on that huge family tree. Not once, nor twice, but thrice did the Plantagenets intermarry with us, the Dukes of Brittany courted our alliance, and the Percies of Northumberland intertwined themselves with our whole illustrious record. So in my boyhood she would expound the matter, with hearth-brush in one

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

hand and a glove full of cinders in the other, while I would sit swinging my knickerbockered legs, swelling with pride until my waistcoat was as tight as a sausage skin, as I contemplated the gulf which separated me from all other little boys who swang their legs upon tables. To this day if I chance to do anything of which she strongly approves, the dear heart can say no more than that I am a thorough Packerham; while if I fall away from the straight path, she says with a sigh that there are points in which I take after the Munros.

She is broad-minded and intensely practical in her ordinary moods, though open to attacks of romance. I can recollect her coming to see me at a junction through which my train passed, with a six months' absence on either side of the incident. We had five minutes' conversation, my head out of the carriage window. "Wear flannel next your skin, my dear boy, and never believe in eternal punishment," was her last item of advice as we rolled out of the station. Then to finish her portrait I need not tell you, who have seen her, that she is young-looking and comely to be the mother of about thirty-five feet of humanity. She was in the railway carriage and I on the platform the other day. "Your husband had better get in or we'll go without him," said the guard. As we went off, the mother was fumbling furiously in her pocket, and I know that she was looking for a shilling.

Ah! what a gossip I have been! And all to lead up to the one sentence that I could not have stayed at home this six months if it had not been for the company and the sympathy of my mother.

Well, now I want to tell you about the scrape that I got myself into. I suppose that I ought to



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pull a long face over it, but for the life of me I can't help laughing. I have you almost up to date in my history now, for what I am going to tell you happened only last week. I must mention no names here even to you; for the curse of Ernulphus, which includes eight and forty minor imprecations, be upon the head of the man who kisses and tells.

You must know, then, that within the boundaries of this city there are two ladies, a mother and a daughter, whom I shall call Mrs. and Miss Laura Andrews. They are patients of the governor's, and have become to some extent friends of the family. Madame is Welsh, charming in appearance, dignified in her manners, and High Church in her convictions. The daughter is rather taller than the mother, but otherwise they are strikingly alike. The mother is thirty-six and the daughter eighteen. Both are exceedingly charming. Had I to choose between them, I think, *entre nous*, that the mother would have attracted me most, for I am thoroughly of Balzac's opinion as to the woman of thirty. However, fate was to will it otherwise.

It was the coming home from a dance which first brought Laura and me together. You know how easily and suddenly these things happen, beginning in playful teasing and ending in something a little warmer than friendship. You squeeze the slender arm which is passed through yours, you venture to take the little gloved hand, you say good-night at absurd length in the shadow of the door. It is innocent and very interesting, love trying his wings in a first little flutter. He will keep his sustained flight later on, the better for the practice. There was never any question of en-

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gagements between us, nor any suggestion of harm. She knew that I was a poor devil with neither means nor prospects, and I knew that her mother's will was her law, and that her course was already marked out for her. However, we exchanged our little confidences, and met occasionally by appointment, and tried to make our lives brighter without darkening those of any one else. I can see you shake your head here and growl, like the comfortable married man that you are, that such relations are very dangerous. So they are, my boy : but neither of us cared, she out of innocence and I out of recklessness, for from the beginning all the fault in the matter was mine.

Well, matters were in this state when one day last week a note came up to the Dad saying that Mrs. Andrews' servant was ill, and would he come at once. The old man had a touch of gout, so I donned my professional coat and sallied forth, thinking that perhaps I might combine pleasure with business, and have a few words with Laura. Sure enough, as I passed up the gravel drive which curves round to the door, I glanced through the drawing-room window, and saw her sitting painting, with her back to the light. It was clear that she had not heard me. The hall door was ajar, and when I pushed it open, no one was in the hall. A sudden fit of roguishness came over me. I pushed the drawing-room door very slowly wider, crept in on tiptoe, stole quietly across, and bending down, I kissed the artist upon the nape of her neck. She turned round with a squeal, and it was the mother!

I don't know whether you have ever been in a tighter corner than that, Harold. It was quite

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tight enough for me. I remember that I smiled as I stole across the carpet on that insane venture. I did not smile again that evening. It makes me hot now when I think of it.

Well, I made the most dreadful fool of myself. At first, the good lady who (as I think I told you) is very dignified and rather reserved, could not believe her senses. Then, as the full force of my enormity came upon her she reared herself up until she seemed the tallest and the coldest woman I had ever seen. It was an interview with a refrigerator. She asked me what I had ever observed in her conduct which had encouraged me to subject her to such an outrage. I saw, of course, that any excuses upon my part would put her on the right track and give poor Laura away; so I stood with my hair bristling and my top hat in my hand, presenting, I am sure, a most extraordinary figure. Indeed, she looked rather funny herself, with her palette in one hand, her brush in the other, and the blank astonishment on her face. I stammered out something about hoping that she did not mind, which made her more angry than ever. "The only possible excuse for your conduct, sir, is that you are under the influence of drink," said she. "I need not say that we do not require the services of a medical man in that condition." I did not try to disabuse her of the idea, for really I could see no better explanation; so I beat a retreat in a very demoralised condition. She wrote a letter to my father about it in the evening, and the old man was very angry indeed. As to the mother, she is as stanch as steel, and quite prepared to prove that poor Mrs. A. was a very deep designing person, who had laid a trap for innocent Johnnie. So

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there has been a grand row ; and not a soul upon earth has the least idea of what it all means, except only yourself as you read this letter.

You can imagine that this has not contributed to make life here more pleasant, for my father cannot bring himself to forgive me. Of course, I don't wonder at his anger. I should be just the same myself. It does look like a shocking breach of professional honour, and a sad disregard of his interests. If he knew the truth he would see that it was nothing worse than a silly ill-timed boyish joke. However, he never shall know the truth. -

And now there is some chance of my getting something to do. We had a letter to-night from Christie & Howden, the writers to the Signet, saying that they desire an interview with me, in view of a possible appointment. We can't imagine what it means, but I am full of hopes. I go to-morrow morning to see them, and I shall let you know the result.

Good-bye, my dear Harold ! Your life flows in a steady stream, and mine in a broken torrent. Yet I would have every detail of what happens to you.

## IV

HOME,  
1st December, 1881.

I MAY be doing you an injustice, Harold, but it seemed to me in your last that there were indications that the free expression of my religious views had been distasteful to you. That you should disagree with me I am prepared for; but that you should object to free and honest discussion of those subjects which above all others men should be honest over, would, I confess, be a disappointment. The Freethinker is placed at this disadvantage in ordinary society, that whereas it would be considered very bad taste upon his part to obtrude his unorthodox opinion, no such consideration hampers those with whom he disagrees. There was a time when it took a brave man to be a Christian. Now it takes a brave man not to be. But if we are to wear a gag, and hide our thoughts when writing in confidence to our most intimate——no, but I won't believe it. You and I have put up too many thoughts together and chased them wherever they would double, Harold; so just write to me like a good fellow, and tell me that I am an ass. Until I have that comforting assurance, I shall place a quarantine upon everything which could conceivably be offensive to you.

Does not lunacy strike you, Harold, as being a very eerie thing? It is a disease of the soul. To think that you may have a man of noble mind, full of every lofty aspiration, and that a gross physical cause, such as the fall of a spicule of bone from the

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inner table of his skull on to the surface of the membrane which covers his brain, may have the ultimate effect of turning him into an obscene creature with every bestial attribute ! That a man's individuality should swing round from pole to pole, and yet that one life should contain these two contradictory personalities—is it not a wondrous thing ?

I ask myself, where is the man, the very, very inmost essence of the man ? See how much you may subtract from him without touching it. It does not lie in the limbs which serve him as tools, nor in the apparatus by which he is to digest, nor in that by which he is to inhale oxygen. All these are mere accessories, the slaves of the lord within. Where, then, is he ? He does not lie in the features which are to express his emotions, nor in the eyes and ears which can be dispensed with by the blind and deaf. Nor is he in the bony framework which is the rack over which nature hangs her veil of flesh. In none of these things lies the essence of the man. And now what is left ? An arched whitish putty-like mass, some fifty odd ounces in weight, with a number of white filaments hanging down from it, looking not unlike the medusæ which float in our summer seas. But these filaments only serve to conduct nerve force to muscles and to organs which serve secondary purposes. They may themselves therefore be disregarded. Nor can we stop here in our elimination. This central mass of nervous matter may be pared down on all sides before we seem to get at the very seat of the soul. Suicides have shot away the front lobes of the brain, and have lived to repent it. Surgeons have cut down upon it and have removed sections. Much of it is merely for the purpose of furnishing

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the springs of motion, and much for the reception of impressions. All this may be put aside as we search for the physical seat of what we call the soul—the spiritual part of the man. And what is left then? A little blob of matter, a handful of nervous dough, a few ounces of tissue, but there—somewhere there—lurks that impalpable seed, to which the rest of our frame is but the pod. The old philosophers who put the soul in the pineal gland were not right, but after all they were uncommonly near the mark.

You'll find my physiology even worse than my theology, Harold. I have a way of telling stories backward to you, which is natural enough when you consider that I always sit down to write under the influence of the last impressions which have come upon me. All this talk about the soul and the brain arises simply from the fact that I have been spending the last few weeks with a lunatic. And how it came about I will tell you as clearly as I can.

You remember that in my last I explained to you how restive I had been getting at home, and how my idiotic mistake had annoyed my father and had made my position here very uncomfortable. Then I mentioned, I think, that I had received a letter from Christie & Howden, the lawyers. Well, I brushed up my Sunday hat, and my mother stood on a chair and landed me twice on the ear with a clothes brush, under the impression that she was making the collar of my overcoat look more presentable. With which accolade out I sallied into the world, the dear soul standing on the steps, peering after me and waving me success.

Well, I was in considerable trepidation when I

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reached the office, for I am a much more nervous person than any of my friends will ever credit me with being. However, I was shown in at once to Mr. James Christie, a wiry, sharp, thin-lipped kind of man, with an abrupt manner, and that sort of Scotch precision of speech which gives the impression of clearness of thought behind it.

"I understand from Professor Maxwell that you have been looking about for an opening, Mr. Munro," said he. Maxwell had said that he would give me a hand if he could; but you remember that he had a reputation for giving such promises rather easily. I speak of a man as I find him, and to me he has been an excellent friend.

"I should be very happy to hear of any opening," said I.

"Of your medical qualifications there is no need to speak," he went on, running his eyes all over me in the most questioning way. "Your Bachelorship of Medicine will answer for that. But Professor Maxwell thought you peculiarly fitted for this vacancy for physical reasons. May I ask you what your weight is?"

"Fourteen stone."

"And you stand, I should judge, about six feet high?"

"Precisely."

"Accustomed too, as I gather, to muscular exercise of every kind. Well, there can be no question that you are the very man for the post, and I shall be very happy to recommend you to Lord Saltire."

"You forget," said I, "that I have not yet heard what the position is, or the terms which you offer."



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He began to laugh at that. "It was a little precipitate on my part," said he; "but I do not think that we are likely to quarrel as to position or terms. You may have heard perhaps of the sad misfortune of our client, Lord Saltire? Not? To put it briefly then, his son, the Hon. James Derwent, the heir to the estates and the only child, was struck down by the sun while fishing without his hat last July. His mind has never recovered from the shock, and he has been ever since in a chronic state of moody sullenness which breaks out every now and then into violent mania. His father will not allow him to be removed from Lochtully Castle, and it is his desire that a medical man should stay there in constant attendance upon his son. Your physical strength would of course be very useful in restraining those violent attacks of which I have spoken. The remuneration will be twelve pounds a month, and you would be required to take over your duties to-morrow."

I walked home, my dear Harold, with a bounding heart, and the pavement like cotton wool under my feet. I found just eightpence in my pocket, and I spent the whole of it on a really good cigar with which to celebrate the occasion. Cullingworth has always had a very high opinion of lunatics for beginners. "Get a lunatic, my boy! Get a lunatic!" he used to shout. Then it was not only the situation, but the fine connection that it opened up. I seemed to see exactly what would happen. There would be illness in the family,—Lord Saltire himself perhaps, or his wife. There would be no time to send for advice. I should be consulted. I should gain their confidence and become their family attendant. They

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would recommend me to their wealthy friends. It was all as clear as possible. I was debating before I reached home whether it would be worth my while to give up a lucrative country practice in order to take the Professorship which might be offered me.

My father took the news philosophically enough, with some rather sardonic remark about my patient and me being well qualified to keep each other company. But to my mother it was a flash of joy, followed by a thunderclap of consternation. I had only three under-shirts, the best of my linen had gone to Belfast to be refronted and recuffed, the night-gowns were not marked yet—there were a dozen of those domestic difficulties of which the mere male never thinks. A dreadful vision of Lady Saltire looking over my things and finding the heel out of one of my socks obsessed my mother. Out we trudged together, and before evening her soul was at rest, and I had mortgaged in advance my first month's salary. She was great, as we walked home, upon the grand 'people into whose service I was to enter. "As a matter of fact, my dear," said she, "they are in a sense relations of yours. You are very closely allied to the Percies, and the Saltires have Percy blood in them also. They are only a cadet branch, and you are close upon the main line; but still it is not for us to deny the connection." She brought a cold sweat out upon me by suggesting that she should make things easy by writing to Lord Saltire and explaining our respective positions. Several times during the evening I heard her murmur complacently that they were only the cadet branch.

Am I not the slowest of story-tellers? But

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you encourage me to it by your sympathetic interest in details. However, I shall move along a little faster now. Next morning I was off to Lochtully, which, as you know, is in the north of Perthshire. It stands three miles from the station, a great grey pinnaced house, with two towers cocking out above the fir woods, like a hare's ears from a tussock of grass. As we drove up to the door I felt pretty solemn—not at all as the main line should do when it condescends to visit the cadet branch. Into the hall as I entered came a grave learned-looking man, with whom in my nervousness I was about to shake hands cordially. Fortunately he forestalled the impending embrace by explaining that he was the butler. He showed me into a small study, where everything stank of varnish and morocco leather, there to await the great man. He proved when he came to be a much less formidable figure than his retainer—indeed, I felt thoroughly at my ease with him from the moment he opened his mouth. He is grizzled, red-faced, sharp-featured, with a prying and yet benevolent expression, very human and just a trifle vulgar. His wife, however, to whom I was afterward introduced, is a most depressing person,—pale, cold, hatchet-faced, with drooping eyelids and very prominent blue veins at her temples. She froze me up again just as I was budding out under the influence of her husband. However, the thing that interested me most of all was to see my patient, to whose room I was taken by Lord Saltire after we had had a cup of tea.

The room was a large bare one, at the end of a long corridor. Near the door was seated a footman, placed there to fill up the gap between two doctors,

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and looking considerably relieved at my advent. Over by the window (which was furnished with a wooden guard, like that of a nursery) sat a tall, yellow-haired, yellow-bearded young man, who raised a pair of startled blue eyes as we entered. He was turning over the pages of a bound copy of the *Illustrated London News*.

"James," said Lord Saltire, "this is Dr. Stark Munro, who has come to look after you."

My patient mumbled something in his beard, which seemed to me suspiciously like "Damn Dr. Stark Munro!" The peer evidently thought the same, for he led me aside by the elbow.

"I don't know whether you have been told that James is a little rough in his ways at present," said he; "his whole nature has deteriorated very much since this calamity came upon him. You must not be offended by anything he may say or do."

"Not in the least," said I.

"There is a taint of this sort upon my wife's side," whispered the little lord; "her uncle's symptoms were identical. Dr. Peterson says that the sunstroke was only the determining cause. The predisposition was already there. I may tell you that the footman will always be in the next room, so that you can call him if you need his assistance."

Well, it ended by lord and lackey moving off, and leaving me with my patient. I thought that I should lose no time in establishing a kindly relation with him, so I drew a chair over to his sofa and began to ask him a few questions about his health and habits. Not a word could I get out of him in reply. He sat as sullen as a mule, with a kind of sneer about his handsome face, which showed me very well that he had heard everything. I tried

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this and tried that, but not a syllable could I get from him ; so at last I turned from him and began to look over some illustrated papers on the table. He doesn't read, it seems, and will do nothing but look at pictures. Well, I was sitting like this with my back half turned, when you can imagine my surprise to feel something plucking gently at me, and to see a great brown hand trying to slip its way into my coat pocket. I caught at the wrist and turned swiftly round, but too late to prevent my handkerchief being whisked out and concealed behind the Hon. James Derwent, who sat grinning at me like a mischievous monkey.

"Come, I may want that," said I, trying to treat the matter as joke.

He used some language which was more scriptural than religious. I saw that he did not mean giving it up, but I was determined not to let him get the upper hand of me. I grabbed for the handkerchief ; and he, with a snarl, caught my hand in both of his. He had a powerful grip, but I managed to get his wrist and to give it a wrench round, until, with a howl, he dropped my property.

"What fun !" said I, pretending to laugh. "Let us try again. Now, you take it up, and see if I can get it again."

But he had had enough of that game. Yet he appeared to be better humoured than before the incident, and I got a few short answers to the questions which I put to him. And here comes in the text which started me preaching about lunacy at the beginning of this letter. *What* a marvellous thing it is ! This man, from all I can learn of him, has suddenly swung clean over from one extreme of character to the other. Every plus has in an

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instant become a minus. He's another man, but in the same case. I am told that he used to be (only a few months ago, mind you) most fastidious in dress and speech. Now he is a foul-tongued rough! He had a nice taste in literature. Now he stares at you if you speak of Shakespeare. Queerest of all, he used to be a very high-and-dry Tory in his opinions. He is fond now of airing the most democratic views, and in a needlessly offensive way. When I did get on terms with him at last, I found that there was nothing on which he could be drawn on to talk so soon as on politics. In substance, I am bound to say that I think his new views are probably saner than his old ones, but the insanity lies in his sudden reasonless change and in his violent blurts of speech.

It was some weeks, however, before I gained his confidence, so far as to be able to hold a real conversation with him. For a long time he was very sulky and suspicious, resenting the constant watch which I kept upon him. This could not be relaxed, for he was full of the most apish tricks. One day he got hold of my tobacco pouch, and stuffed two ounces of my tobacco into the long barrel of an Eastern gun which hangs on the wall. He jammed it all down with the ramrod, and I was never able to get it up again. Another time he threw an earthenware spittoon through the window, and would have sent the clock after it had I not prevented him. Every day I took him for a two hours' constitutional, save when it rained, and then we walked religiously for the same space up and down the room. It was a deadly, dreary, kind of life!

I was supposed to have my eye upon him all

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day, with a two-hour interval every afternoon and an evening to myself upon Fridays. But then what was the use of an evening to myself when there was no town near, and I had no friends whom I could visit? I did a fair amount of reading, for Lord Saltire let me have the run of his library. Gibbon gave me a couple of enchanting weeks. You know the effect that he produces. You seem to be serenely floating upon a cloud, and looking down on all these pigmy armies and navies, with a wise Mentor ever at your side to whisper to you the inner meaning of all that majestic panorama.

Now and again young Derwent introduced some excitement into my dull life. On one occasion when we were walking in the grounds, he suddenly snatched up a spade from a grass-plot, and rushed at an inoffensive under-gardener. The man ran screaming for his life, with my patient cursing at his very heels, and me within a few paces of him. When I at last laid my hand on his collar, he threw down his weapon and burst into shrieks of laughter. It was only mischief, and not ferocity; but when that under-gardener saw us coming after that he was off with a face like a cream cheese. At night the attendant slept in a camp-bed at the foot of the patient's, and my room was next door, so that I could be called if necessary. No, it was not a very exhilarating life!

We used to go down to family meals when there were no visitors; and there we made a curious quartette: Jimmy (as he wished me to call him) glum and silent; I with the tail of my eye always twisting round to him; Lady Saltire with her condescending eyelids and her blue veins; and the good-natured peer, fussy and genial, but always

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rather subdued in the presence of his wife. She looked as if a glass of good wine would do her good, and he as if he would be the better for abstinence; and so, in accordance with the usual lopsidedness of life, he drank freely, and she nothing but limejuice and water. You cannot imagine a more ignorant, intolerant, narrow-minded woman than she. If she had only been content to be silent and hidden that small brain of hers, it would not have mattered; but there was no end to her bitter and exasperating clacking. What was she after all but a pipe for conveying disease from one generation to another? She was bounded by insanity upon the north and upon the south. I resolutely set myself to avoid all argument with her; but she knew, with her woman's instinct, that we were as far apart as the poles, and took a pleasure in waving the red flag before me. One day she was waxing eloquent as to the crime of a minister of an Episcopal church performing any service in a Presbyterian chapel. Some neighbouring minister had done it, it seems; and if he had been marked down in a pot-house she could not have spoken with greater loathing. I suppose that my eyes were less under control than my tongue, for she suddenly turned upon me with:

"I see that you don't agree with me, Dr. Munro."

I replied quietly that I did not, and tried to change the conversation; but she was not to be shaken off.

"Why not, may I ask?"

I explained that in my opinion the tendency of the age was to break down those ridiculous doctrinal points which are so useless, and which have



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for so long set people by the ears. I added that I hoped the time was soon coming when good men of all creeds would throw this lumber overboard and join hands together.

She half rose, almost speechless with indignation.

"I presume," said she, "that you are one of those people who would put all churches on the same footing?"

"Most certainly," I answered.

She stood erect in a kind of cold fury, and swept out of the room. Jimmy began to chuckle, and his father looked perplexed.

"I am sorry that my opinions are offensive to Lady Saltire," I remarked.

"Yes, yes; it's a pity; a pity," said he; "well, well, we must say what we think; but it's a pity you think it—a very great pity."

I quite expected to get my dismissal over this business, and indeed, indirectly I may say that I did so. From that day Lady Saltire was as rude to me as she could be, and never lost an opportunity of making attacks upon what she imagined to be my opinions. Of these I never took the slightest notice; but at last on an evil day she went for me point-blank, so that there was no getting away from her. It was just at the end of lunch, when the footman had left the room. She had been talking about Lord Saltire's going up to London to vote upon some question in the House of Lords.

"Perhaps, Dr. Munro," said she, turning acidly upon me, "that is also an institution which has not been fortunate enough to win your approval."

"It is a question, Lady Saltire, which I should much prefer not to discuss," I answered.

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"Oh, you might just as well have the courage of your convictions," said she. "Since you desire to despoil the National Church, it is natural enough that you should wish also to break up the Constitution. I have heard that an atheist is always a red republican."

Lord Saltire rose, wishing, I have no doubt, to put an end to the conversation. Jimmy and I rose also; and suddenly I saw that instead of moving toward the door he was going to his mother. Knowing his little tricks, I passed my hand under his arm, and tried to steer him away. She noticed it, however, and interfered.

"Did you wish to speak to me, James?"

"I want to whisper in your ear, mother."

"Pray, don't excite yourself, sir," said I, again attempting to detain him. Lady Saltire arched her aristocratic eyebrows.

"I think, Dr. Munro, that you push your authority rather far when you venture to interfere between a mother and her son," said she. "What was it, my poor dear boy?"

Jimmy bent down and whispered something in her ear. The blood rushed into her pale face, and she sprang from him as if he had struck her. Jimmy began to snigger.

"This is your doing, Dr. Munro," she cried furiously. "You have corrupted my son's mind, and encouraged him to insult his mother."

"My dear! My dear!" said her husband soothingly, and I quietly led the recalcitrant Jimmy upstairs. I asked him what it was that he had said to his mother, but got only chuckles in reply.

I had a presentiment that I should hear more of

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the matter; and I was not wrong. Lord Saltire called me into his study in the evening.

"The fact is, doctor," said he, "that Lady Saltire has been extremely annoyed and grieved about what occurred at lunch to-day. Of course, you can imagine that such an expression coming from her own son, shocked her more than I can tell."

"I assure you, Lord Saltire," said I, "that I have no idea at all what passed between Lady Saltire and my patient."

"Well," said he, "without going into details, I may say that what he whispered was a blasphemous wish, most coarsely expressed, as to the future of that Upper House to which I have the honour to belong."

"I am very sorry," said I, "and I assure you that I have never encouraged him in his extreme political views, which seem to me to be symptoms of his disease."

"I am quite convinced that what you say is true," he answered; "but Lady Saltire is unhappily of the opinion that you have instilled these ideas into him. You know that it is a little difficult sometimes to reason with a lady. However, I have no doubt that all may be smoothed over if you would see Lady Saltire and assure her that she has misunderstood your views upon this point, and that you are personally a supporter of an Hereditary Chamber."

It put me in a tight corner, Harold; but my mind was instantly made up. From the first word I had read my dismissal in every uneasy glance of his little eyes.

"I am afraid," said I, "that that is rather further than I am prepared to go. I think that since there

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has been for some weeks a certain friction between Lady Saltire and myself, it would perhaps be as well that I should resign the post which I hold in your household. I shall be happy, however, to remain here until you have found someone to take over my duties."

"Well, I am sorry it has come to this, and yet it may be that you are right," said he, with an expression of relief; "as to James, there need be no difficulty about that, for Dr. Patterson could come in to-morrow morning."

"Then to-morrow morning let it be," I answered.

"Very good, Dr. Munro; I will see that you have your cheque before you go."

So there was the end of all my fine dreams about aristocratic practices and wonderful introductions! I believe the only person in the whole house who regretted me was Jimmy, who was quite downcast at the news. His grief, however, did not prevent him from brushing my new top-hat the wrong way on the morning that I left. I did not notice it until I reached the station, and a most undignified object I must have looked when I took my departure.

So ends the history of a failure. I am, as you know, inclined to fatalism, and do not believe that such a thing as chance exists; so I am bound to think that this experience was given to me for some end. It was a preliminary canter for the big race, perhaps. My mother was disappointed, but tried to show it as little as possible. My father was a little sardonic over the matter. I fear that the gap between us widens. By the way, an extraordinary card arrived from Cullingworth

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during my absence. "You are my man," said he; "mind that I am to have you when I want you." There was no date and no address, but the postmark was Bradfield in the north of England. Does it mean nothing? Or may it mean everything? We must wait and see.

Good-bye, old man. Let me hear equally fully about your own affairs. How did the Rattray business go off?

## V

MERTON ON THE MOORS,  
5th March, 1882.

I WAS so delighted, my dear chap, to have your assurance that nothing that I have said or could say upon the subject of religion could offend you. It is difficult to tell you how pleased and relieved I was at your cordial letter. I have no one to whom I can talk upon such matters. I am all driven inward, and thought turns sour when one lets it stagnate like that. It is a grand thing to be able to tell it all to a sympathetic listener—and the more so perhaps when he looks at it all from another standpoint. It steadies and sobers one.

Those whom I love best are those who have least sympathy with my struggles. They talk about having faith, as if it could be done by an act of volition. They might as well tell me to have black hair instead of red. I might simulate it perhaps by refusing to use my reason at all in religious matters. But I will never be traitor to the highest thing that God has given me. I *will* use it. It is more moral to use it and go wrong, than to forego it and be right. It is only a little foot-rule, and I have to measure Mount Everest with it; but it's all I have, and I'll never give it up while there's breath between my lips.

With all respect to you, Harold, it is very easy to be orthodox. A man who wanted mental peace and material advancement in this world would certainly choose to be so. As Smiles says—"A dead fish can float with the stream, but it takes a man

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to swim against it." What could be more noble than the start and the starter of Christianity? How beautiful the upward struggle of an idea, like some sweet flower blossoming out amongst rubble and cinders! But, alas! to say that this idea was a final idea! That this scheme of thought was above the reason! That this gentle philosopher was that supreme intelligence to which we cannot even imagine a personality without irreverence!—all this will come to rank with the strangest delusions of mankind. And then how clouded has become that fine daybreak of Christianity! Its representatives have risen from the manger to the palace, from the fishing smack to the House of Lords. Nor is that other old potentate in the Vatican, with his art treasures, his guards, and his cellars of wine, in a more logical position. They are all good and talented men, and in the market of brains are worth perhaps as much as they get. But how can they bring themselves to pose as the representatives of a creed, which, as they themselves expound it, is based upon humility, poverty, and self-denial? Not one of them who would not quote with approval the parable of the Wedding Guest. But try putting one of them out of his due precedence at the next Court reception. It happened some little time ago with a Cardinal, and England rang with his protests. How blind not to see how they would spring at one leap into the real first place if they would but resolutely claim the last as the special badge of their master!

What can we know? What are we all? Poor silly half-brained things peering out at the infinite, with the aspirations of angels and the instincts of

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beasts. But surely all will be well with us. If not, then He who made us is evil, which is not to be thought. Surely, then, all must go very well with us!

I feel ashamed when I read this over. My mind fills in all the trains of thought of which you have the rude ends peeping out from this tangle. Make what you can of it, dear Harold, and believe that it all comes from my innermost heart. Above all may I be kept from becoming a partisan, and tampering with truth in order to sustain a case. Let me but get a hand on her skirt, and she may drag me where she will, if she will but turn her face from time to time that I may know her.

You'll see from the address of this letter, Harold, that I have left Scotland and am in Yorkshire. I have been here three months, and am now on the eve of leaving under the strangest circumstances and with the queerest prospects. Good old Cullingworth has turned out a trump, as I always knew he would. But, as usual, I am beginning at the wrong end, so here goes to give you an idea of what has been happening.

I told you in my last about my lunacy adventure and my ignominious return from Lochtully Castle. When I had settled for the flannel vests which my mother had ordered so lavishly I had only five pounds left out of my pay. With this, as it was the first money that I had ever earned in my life, I bought her a gold bangle, so behold me reduced at once to my usual empty pocketed condition. Well, it was something just to feel that I *had* earned money. It gave me an assurance that I might again.

I had not been at home more than a few days



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when my father called me into the study after breakfast one morning and spoke very seriously as to our financial position. He began the interview by unbuttoning his waistcoat and asking me to listen at his fifth intercostal space, two inches from the left sternal line. I did so, and was shocked to hear a well-marked mitral regurgitant murmur.

"It is of old standing," said he, "but of late I have had a puffiness about the ankles and some renal symptoms which show me that it is beginning to tell."

I tried to express my grief and sympathy, but he cut me short with some asperity.

"The point is," said he, "that no insurance office would accept my life, and that I have been unable, owing to competition and increased expenses, to lay anything by. If I die soon (which, between ourselves, is by no means improbable), I must leave to your care your mother and the children. My practice is so entirely a personal one that I cannot hope to be able to hand over to you enough to afford a living."

I thought of Cullingworth's advice about going where you are least known. "I think," said I, "that my chances would be better away from here."

"Then you must lose no time in establishing yourself," said he. "Your position would be one of great responsibility if anything were to happen to me just now. I had hoped that you had found an excellent opening with the Saltires; but I fear that you can hardly expect to get on in the world, my boy, if you insult your employer's religious and political views at his own table."

It wasn't a time to argue, so I said nothing. My

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father took a copy of the *Lancet* out of his desk, and turned up an advertisement which he had marked with a blue pencil. "Read this!" said he.

I've got it before me as I write. It runs thus: "Qualified Assistant. Wanted at once in a large country and colliery practice. Thorough knowledge of obstetrics and dispensing indispensable. Ride and drive. £70 a year. Apply Dr. Horton, Merton on the Moors, Yorkshire."

"There might be an opening there," said he. "I know Horton, and I am convinced that I can get you the appointment. It would at least give you the opportunity of looking round and seeing whether there was any vacancy there. How do you think it would suit you?"

Of course I could only answer that I was willing to turn my hand to anything. But that interview has left a mark upon me—a heavy ever-present gloom away at the back of my soul, which I am conscious of even when the cause of it has for a moment gone out of my thoughts. I had enough to make a man serious before, when I had to face the world without money or interest. But now to think of the mother and my sisters and little Paul all leaning upon me when I cannot stand myself—it is a nightmare. Could there be anything more dreadful in life than to have those you love looking to you for help and to be unable to give it? But perhaps it won't come to that. Perhaps my father may hold his own for years. Come what may, I am bound to think that all things are ordered for the best; though when the good is a furlong off, and we with our beetle eyes can only see three inches, it takes some confidence in general principles to pull us through.

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Well, it was all fixed up; and down I came to Yorkshire. I wasn't in the best of spirits when I started, Harold, but they went down and down as I neared my destination. How people can dwell in such places passes my comprehension. What can life offer them to make up for these mutilations of the face of Nature? No woods, little grass, spouting chimneys, slate-coloured streams, sloping mounds of coke and slag, topped by the great wheels and pumps of the mines. Cinder-strewn paths, black as though stained by the weary miners who toil among them, lead through the tarnished fields to the rows of smoke-stained cottages. How can any young unmarried man accept such a lot while there's an empty hammock in the navy, or a berth in a merchant fore-castle? How many shillings a week is the breath of the ocean worth? It seems to me that if I were a poor man,—well, upon my word, that “if” is rather funny when I think that many of the dwellers in those smoky cottages have twice my salary with half my expenses.

Well, as I said, my spirits sank lower and lower until they got down into the bulb, when on looking through the gathering gloom I saw “Merton” on printed the lamps of a dreary dismal station. I got out, and was standing beside my trunk and my hat-box, waiting for a porter, when up came a cheery-looking fellow and asked me whether I was Dr. Stark Munro. “I'm Horton,” said he; and shook hands cordially.

In that melancholy place the sight of him was like a fire on a frosty night. He was gaily dressed in the first place, check trousers, white waistcoat, a flower in his button-hole. But the look of the man was very much to my heart. He was ruddy

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cheeked and black eyed, with a jolly stout figure and an honest genial smile. I felt as we clinched hands in the foggy grimy station that I had met a man and a friend.

His carriage was waiting, and we drove out to his residence, The Myrtles, where I was speedily introduced both to his family and his practice. The former is small, and the latter enormous. The wife is dead; but her mother, Mrs. White, keeps house for him; and there are two dear little girls, about five and seven. Then there is an unqualified assistant, a young Irish student, who, with the three maids, the coachman, and the stable boy, makes up the whole establishment. When I tell you that we give four horses quite as much as they can do, you will have an idea of the ground we cover.

The house, a large square brick one, standing in its own grounds, is built on a small hill in an oasis of green fields. Beyond this, however, on every side the veil of smoke hangs over the country, with the mine pumps and the chimneys bristling out of it. It would be a dreadful place for an idle man; but we are all so busy that we have hardly time to think whether there's a view or not.

Day and night we are at work; and yet the three months have been very pleasant ones to look back upon.

I'll give you an idea of what a day's work is like. We breakfast about nine o'clock, and immediately afterward the morning patients begin to drop in. Many of them are very poor people, belonging to the colliery clubs, the principle of which is, that the members pay a little over a halfpenny a week all the year round, well or ill, in return for which

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they get medicine and attendance free. "Not much of a catch for the doctors," you would say, but it is astonishing what competition there is among them to get the appointment. You see it is a certainty for one thing, and it leads indirectly to other little extras. Besides, it mounts up surprisingly. I have no doubt that Horton has five or six hundred a year from his clubs alone. On the other hand, you can imagine that club patients, since they pay the same in any case, don't let their ailments go very far before they are round in the consulting room.

Well, then, by half-past nine we are in full blast. Horton is seeing the better patients in the consulting room, I am interviewing the poorer ones in the waiting-room, and McCarthy, the Irishman, making up prescriptions as hard as he can tear. By the club rules, patients are bound to find their own bottles and corks. They generally remember the bottle, but always forget the cork. "Ye must pay a pinny or ilse put your forefinger in," says McCarthy. They have an idea that all the strength of the medicine goes if the bottle is open, so they trot off with their fingers stuck in the necks. They have the most singular notions about medicines. "It's that strong that a spoon will stand oop in't!" is one man's description. Above all, they love to have two bottles, one with a solution of citric acid, and the other with carbonate of soda. When the mixture begins to fizz, they realise that there is indeed a science of medicine.

This sort of work, with vaccinations, bandagings, and minor surgery, takes us to nearly eleven o'clock, when we assemble in Horton's room to make out the list. All the names of patients under treat-

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ment are pinned upon a big board. We sit round with note books open, and distribute those who must be seen between us. By the time this is done and the horses in, it is half-past eleven. Then away we all fly upon our several tasks: Horton in a carriage and pair to see the employers; I in a dog cart to see the employed; and McCarthy on his good Irish legs to see those chronic cases to which a qualified man can do no good, and an unqualified no harm.

Well, we all work back again by two o'clock, when we find dinner waiting for us. We may or may not have finished our rounds. If not away we go again. If we have, Horton dictates his prescriptions, and strides off to bed with his black clay pipe in his mouth. He is the most abandoned smoker I have ever met with, collecting the dottles of his pipes in the evening, and smoking them the next morning before breakfast in the stable yard. When he has departed for his nap, McCarthy and I get to work on the medicine. There are, perhaps, fifty bottles to put up, with pills, ointment, etc. It is quite half-past four before we have them all laid out on the shelf addressed to the respective invalids. Then we have an hour or so of quiet, when we smoke or read, or box with the coachman in the harness-room. After tea the evening's work commences. From six to nine people are coming in for their medicine, or fresh patients wishing advice. When these are settled we have to see again any very grave cases which may be on the list; and so, about ten o'clock, we may hope to have another smoke, and perhaps a game of cards. Then it is a rare thing for a night to pass without one or other of us having to trudge off to a case which may take

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us two hours, or may take us ten. . Hard work, as you see; but Horton is such a good chap, and works so hard himself, that one does not mind what one does. And then we are all like brothers in the house; our talk is just a rattle of chaff, and the patients are as homely as ourselves, so that the work becomes quite a pleasure to all of us.

Yes, Horton is a real right-down good fellow. His heart is broad and kind and generous. There is nothing petty in the man. He loves to see those around him happy; and the sight of his sturdy figure and jolly red face goes far to make them so. Nature meant him to be a healer; for he brightens up a sick room as he did the Merton station when first I set eyes upon him. Don't imagine from my description that he is in any way soft, however. There is no one on whom one could be less likely to impose. He has a temper which is easily aflame and as easily appeased. A mistake in the dispensing may wake it up; and then he bursts into the surgery like a whiff of east wind, his cheeks red, his whiskers bristling, and his eyes malignant. The daybook is banged, the bottles rattled, the counter thumped, and then he is off again with five doors slamming behind him. We can trace his progress when the black mood is on him by those dwindling slams. Perhaps it is that McCarthy has labelled the cough mixture as the eye-wash, or sent an empty pillbox with an exhortation to take one every four hours. In any case the cyclone comes and goes, and by the next meal all is peace once more.

I said that the patients were very homely. Any one who is over-starched might well come here to be unstiffened. I confess that I did not quite fall

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in with it at once. When on one of my first mornings a club patient with his bottle under his arm came up to me and asked me if I were the doctor's man, I sent him on to see the groom in the stable. But soon one falls into the humour of it. There is no offence meant; and why should any be taken? They are kindly, generous folk; and if they pay no respect to your profession in the abstract, and so rather hurt your dignity, they will be as leal and true as possible to yourself if you can win their respect. I like the grip of their greasy and blackened hands.

Another peculiarity of the district is that many of the manufacturers and colliery owners have risen from the workmen, and have (in some cases at least) retained their old manners and even their old dress. The other day Mrs. White, Horton's mother-in-law, had a violent sick headache, and, as we are all very fond of the kind old lady, we were trying to keep things as quiet as possible down-stairs. Suddenly there came a bang! bang! bang! at the knocker; and then in an instant another rattling series of knocks, as if a tethered donkey were trying to kick in the panel. After all our efforts for silence it was exasperating. I rushed to the door to find a seedy-looking person just raising his hand to commence a fresh bombardment. "What on earth's the matter?" I asked, only I may have been a little more emphatic. "Pain in the jaw," said he. "You needn't make such a noise," said I; "other people are ill besides you." "If I pay my money, young man, I'll make such noise as I like." And actually in cold blood he commenced a fresh assault upon the door. He would have gone on with his devil's tattoo all morning if I had not led



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him down the path and seen him off the premises. An hour afterward Horton whirled into the surgery, with a trail of banged doors behind him. "What's this about Mr. Usher, Munro?" he asked. "He says that you were violent toward him." "There was a club patient here who kept on banging the knocker," said I; "I was afraid that he would disturb Mrs. White, and so I made him stop." Horton's eyes began to twinkle. "My boy," said he, "that club patient, as you call him, is the richest man in Merton, and worth a hundred a year to me." I have no doubt that he appeased him by some tale of my disgrace and degradation; but I have not heard anything of the matter since.

It has been good for me to be here, Harold. It has brought me in close contact with the working classes, and made me realise what fine people they are. Because one drunkard goes home howling on a Saturday night, we are too apt to overlook the ninety-nine decent folk by their own firesides. I shall not make that mistake any more. The kindness of the poor to the poor makes a man sick of himself. And their sweet patience! Depend upon it, if ever there is a popular rising, the wrongs which lead to it must be monstrous and indefensible. I think the excesses of the French Revolution are dreadful enough in themselves, but much more so as an index to the slow centuries of misery against which they were a mad protest. And then the wisdom of the poor! It is amusing to read the glib newspaper man writing about the ignorance of the masses. They don't know the date of Magna Charta, or whom John of Gaunt married; but put a practical up-to-date problem before them, and see how unerringly they take the right side. Didn't

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they put the Reform Bill through in the teeth of the opposition of the majority of the so-called educated classes? Didn't they back the North against the South when nearly all our leaders went wrong? When universal arbitration and the suppression of the liquor traffic come, is it not sure to be from the pressure of these humble folks? They look at life with clearer and more unselfish eyes. It's an axiom, I think, that to heighten a nation's wisdom you must lower its franchise.

I very often have my doubts, Harold, if there is such a thing as the existence of evil. If we could honestly convince ourselves that there was not, it would help us so much in formulating a rational religion. But don't let us strain truth even for such an object as that. I must confess that there are some forms of vice, cruelty for example, for which it is hard to find any explanation, save indeed that it is a degenerate survival of that warlike ferocity which may once have been of service in helping to protect the community. No; let me be frank, and say that I can't make cruelty fit into my scheme. But when you find that other evils, which seem at first sight black enough, really tend in the long run to the good of mankind, it may be hoped that those which continue to puzzle us may at last be found to serve the same end in some fashion which is now inexplicable.

It seems to me that the study of life by the physician vindicates the moral principles of right and wrong. But when you look closely it is a question whether that which is a wrong to the present community may not prove to have been a right to the interests of posterity. That sounds a little foggy; but I will make my meaning more clear when I say

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that I think right and wrong are both tools which are being wielded by those great hands which are shaping the destinies of the universe, that both are making for improvement; but that the action of the one is immediate, and that of the other more slow, but none the less certain. Our own distinction of right and wrong is founded too much upon the immediate convenience of the community, and does not inquire sufficiently deeply into the ultimate effect.

I have my own views about Nature's methods, though I feel that it is rather like a beetle giving his opinions upon the milky way. However, they have the merit of being consoling; for if we could conscientiously see that sin served a purpose, and a good one, it would take some of the blackness out of life. It seems to me, then, that Nature, still working on the lines of evolution, strengthens the race in two ways. The one is by improving those who are morally strong, which is done by increased knowledge and broadening religious views; the other, and hardly less important, is by the killing off and extinction of those who are morally weak. This is accomplished by drink and immorality. These are really two of the most important forces which work for the ultimate perfection of the race. I picture them as two great invisible hands hovering over the garden of life and plucking up the weeds. Looked at in one's own day, one can only see that they produce degradation and misery. But at the end of a third generation from then, what has happened? The line of the drunkard and of the debauchee, physically as well as morally weakened, is either extinct or on the way toward it. Struma, tubercle, nervous disease, have all lent a

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hand toward the pruning off of that rotten branch, and the average of the race is thereby improved. I believe from the little that I have seen of life, that it is a law which acts with startling swiftness, that a majority of drunkards never perpetuate their species at all, and that when the curse is hereditary, the second generation generally sees the end of it.

Don't misunderstand me, and quote me as saying that it is a good thing for a nation that it should have many drunkards. Nothing of the kind. What I say is, that if a nation has many morally weak people, then it is good that there should be a means for checking those weaker strains. Nature has her devices, and drink is among them. When there are no more drunkards and reprobates, it means that the race is so advanced that it no longer needs such rough treatment. Then the all-wise Engineer will speed us along in some other fashion.

I've been thinking a good deal lately about this question of the uses of evil, and of how powerful a tool it is in the hands of the Creator. Last night the whole thing crystallised out quite suddenly into a small set of verses. Please jump them if they bore you.

### WITH EITHER HAND

God's own best will bide the test,  
And God's own worst will fall ;  
But, best or worst or last or first,  
He ordereth it all.

For *all* is good, if understood,  
(Ah, could we understand !)  
And right and ill are tools of skill  
Held in His either hand.

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The harlot and the anchorite,  
The martyr and the rake,  
Defly He fashions each aright,  
Its vital part to take.

Wisdom He makes to guide the sap  
Where the high blossoms be ;  
And Lust to kill the weaker branch,  
And Drink to trim the tree.

And Holiness that so the bole  
Be solid at the core ;  
And Plague and Fever, that the whole  
Be changing evermore.

He strews the microbes in the lung,  
The blood-clot in the brain ;  
With test and test He picks the best,  
Then tests them once again.

He tests the body and the mind,  
He rings them o'er and o'er ;  
And if they crack, He throws them back  
And fashions them once more.

He chokes the infant throat with slime,  
He sets the ferment free ;  
He builds the tiny tube of lime  
That blocks the artery.

He lets the youthful dreamer store  
Great projects in his brain,  
Until He drops the fungus spore  
That smears them out again.

He stores the milk that feeds the babe,  
He dulls the tortured nerve ;  
He gives a hundred joys of sense  
Where few or none might serve.

And still He trains the branch of good  
Where the high blossoms be,

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And wieldeth still the shears of ill  
To prune and prune His tree.

Dim are these peering eyes of mine,  
And dark what I have seen ;  
But be I wrong, the wrong is Thine,  
Else had it never been.

I am quite ashamed of having been so didactic. But it is fine to think that sin may have an object and work toward good. My father says that I seem to look upon the universe as if it were my property, and can't be happy until I know that all is right with it. Well, it *does* send a glow through me when I seem to catch a glimpse of the light behind the clouds.

And now for my big bit of news which is going to change my whole life. Whom do you think I had a letter from last Tuesday week? From Cullingworth, no less. It had no beginning, no end, was addressed all wrong, and written with a very thick quill pen upon the back of a prescription. How it ever reached me is a wonder. This is what he had to say:—

“Started here in Bradfield last June. Colossal success. My example must revolutionise medical practice. Rapidly making fortune. Have invention which is worth millions. Unless our Admiralty take it up shall make Brazil the leading naval power. Come down by next train on receiving this. Have plenty for you to do.”

That was the whole of this extraordinary letter; it had no name to it, which was certainly reasonable enough, since no one else could have written it. Knowing Cullingworth so well as I did, I took it with reservations and deductions. How could he

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have made so rapid and complete a success in a town in which he must have been a complete stranger? It was incredible. And yet there must be some truth in it, or he would not invite me to come down and test it. On the whole, I thought that I had better move very cautiously in the matter; for I was happy and snug where I was, and kept on putting a little by, which would I hoped form a nucleus to start me in practice. It is only a few pounds up to date, but in a year or so it might mount to something. I wrote to Cullingworth, therefore, thanking him for having remembered me, and explaining how matters stood. I had had great difficulty in finding an opening, I said, and now that I had one I was loth to give it up save for a permanency.

Ten days passed, during which Cullingworth was silent. Then came a huge telegram.

"Your letter to hand. Why not call me a liar at once? I tell you that I have seen thirty thousand patients in the last year. My actual takings have been over four thousand pounds. All patients come to me. Would not cross the street to see Queen Victoria. You can have all visiting, all surgery, all midwifery. Make what you like of it. Will guarantee three hundred pounds the first year."

Well, this began to look more like business—especially that last sentence. I took it to Horton, and asked his advice. His opinion was that I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. So it ended by my wiring back accepting the partnership—if it is a partnership—and to-morrow morning I am off to Bradfield with great hopes and a small portmanteau. I know how interested you

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are in the personality of Cullingworth—as every one is who comes, even at second hand, within range of his influence; and so you may rely upon it that I shall give you a very full and particular account of all that passes between us. I am looking forward immensely to seeing him again, and I trust we won't have any rows.

Good-bye, old chap. My foot is upon the threshold of fortune. Congratulate me.



## VI

### 1 THE PARADE, BRADFIELD, 7th March, 1882.

It is only two days since I wrote to you, my dear old chap, and yet I find myself loaded to the muzzle and at full cock again. I have come to Bradfield. I have seen Cullingworth once more, and I have found that all he has told me is true. Yes; incredible as it sounded, this wonderful fellow seems to have actually built up a great practice in little more than a year. He really is, with all his eccentricities, a very remarkable man, Harold. He doesn't seem to have a chance of showing his true powers in this matured civilisation. The law and custom hamper him. He is the sort of fellow who would come right to the front in a French Revolution. Or if you put him as Emperor over some of these little South American States, I believe that in ten years he would either be in his grave, or would have the Continent. Yes; Cullingworth is fit to fight for a higher stake than a medical practice, and on a bigger stage than an English provincial town. When I read of Aaron Burr in your history I always picture him as a man like C.

I had the kindest of leave-takings from Horton. If he had been my brother he could not have been more affectionate. I could not have thought that I should grow so fond of a man in so short a time. He takes the keenest interest in my venture, and I am to write him a full account. He gave me as we parted a black old meerschaum which he had

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coloured himself—the last possible pledge of affection from a smoker. It was pleasant for me to feel that if all went wrong at Bradfield, I had a little harbour at Merton for which I could make. Still, of course, pleasant and instructive as the life there was, I could not shut my eyes to the fact that it would take a terribly long time before I could save enough to buy a share in a practice—a longer time probably than my poor father's strength would last. That telegram of Cullingworth's, in which, as you may remember, he guaranteed me three hundred pounds in the first year, gave me hopes of a much more rapid career. You will agree with me, I am sure, that I did wisely to go to him.

I had an adventure upon the way to Bradfield. The carriage in which I was travelling contained a party of three, at whom I took the most casual of glances before settling down to the daily paper. There was an elderly lady, with a bright rosy face, gold spectacles, and a dash of red velvet in her bonnet. With her were two younger people, who I took to be her son and her daughter—the one a quiet, gentle-looking girl of twenty or so, dressed in black, and the other a short, thick-set young fellow, a year or two older. The two ladies sat by each other in the far corner, and the son (as I presume him to be) sat opposite me. We may have travelled an hour or more without my paying any attention to this little family party, save that I could not help hearing some talk between the two ladies. The younger, who was addressed as Winnie, had, as I noticed, a very sweet and soothing voice. She called the elder "mother," which showed that I was right as to the relationship.

I was sitting, then, still reading my paper, when

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I was surprised to get a kick on the shins from the young fellow opposite. I moved my legs, thinking that it was an accident, but an instant afterward I received another and a harder one. I dropped my paper with a growl, but the moment that I glanced at him I saw how the matter stood. His foot was jerking spasmodically, his two hands clenched, and drumming against his breast, while his eyes were rolling upward until only the rim of his iris was to be seen. I sprang upon him, tore open his collar, unbuttoned his waistcoat, and pulled his head down upon the seat. Crash went one of his heels through the carriage window, but I contrived to sit upon his knees while I kept hold of his two wrists.

"Don't be alarmed!" I cried; "it's epilepsy, and will soon pass!"

Glancing up, I saw that the little girl was sitting very pale and quiet in the corner. The mother had pulled a bottle out of her bag and was quite cool and helpful.

"He often has them," said she; "this is bro-mide."

"He is coming out," I answered; "you look after Winnie."

I blurted it out because her head seemed to rock as if she were going off; but the absurdity of the thing struck us all next moment, and the mother burst into a laugh in which the daughter and I joined. The son had opened his eyes and had ceased to struggle.

"I must really beg your pardon," said I, as I helped him up again. "I had not the advantage of knowing your other name, and I was in such a hurry that I had no time to think what I was saying."

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They laughed again in the most good-humoured way, and, as soon as the young fellow had recovered, we all joined in quite a confidential conversation. It is wonderful how the intrusion of any of the realities of life brushes away the cobwebs of etiquette. In half an hour we knew all about each other, or at any rate I knew all about them. Mrs. La Force was the mother's name, a widow with these two children. They had given up house-keeping, and found it more pleasant to live in apartments, travelling from one watering place to another. Their one trouble was the nervous weakness of the son Fred. They were now on their way to Birchespool, where they hoped that he might get some good from the bracing air. I was able to recommend vegetarianism, which I have found to act like a charm in such cases. We had quite a spirited conversation, and I think that we were sorry on both sides when we came to the Junction where they had to change. Mrs. La Force gave me her card, and I promised to call if ever I should be in Birchespool.

However, all this must be stupid enough to you. You know my little ways by this time, and you don't expect me to keep on the main line of my story. However, I am back on the rails now, and I shall try to remain there.

Well, it was nearly six o'clock, and evening was just creeping in when we drew up in Bradfield Station. The first thing I saw when I looked out of the window was Cullingworth, exactly the same as ever, striding in his jerky way down the platform, his coat flying open, his chin thrust forward (he is the most underhung man I have ever seen), and his great teeth all gleaming, like a good-

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natured bloodhound. He roared with delight when he saw me, wrung my hand, and slapped me enthusiastically upon the shoulder.

"My dear chap!" said he. "We'll clear this town out. I tell you, Munro, we won't leave a doctor in it. It's all they can do now to get butter to their bread; and when we get to work together they'll have to eat it dry. Listen to me, my boy! There are a hundred and twenty thousand folk in this town, all shrieking for advice, and there isn't a doctor who knows a rhubarb pill from a calculus. Man, we only have to gather them in. I stand and take the money until my arm aches."

"But how is it?" I asked, as we pushed our way through the crowd. "Are there so few other doctors?"

"Few!" he roared. "By Crums, the streets are blocked with them. You couldn't fall out of a window in this town without killing a doctor. But of all the——well, there, you'll see them for yourself. You walked to my house at Avonmouth, Munro. I don't let my friends walk to my house at Bradfield—eh, what?"

A well-appointed carriage with two fine black horses was drawn up at the station entrance. The smart coachman touched his hat as Cullingworth opened the door.

"Which of the houses, sir?" he asked.

Cullingworth's eyes shot round to me to see what I thought of such a query. Between ourselves I have not the slightest doubt that he had instructed the man to ask it. He always had a fine eye for effect, but he usually erred by under-rating the intelligence of those around him.

"Ah!" said he, rubbing his chin like a man in

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doubt. "Well, I daresay dinner will be nearly ready. Drive to the town residential."

"Good gracious, Cullingworth!" said I as we started. "How many houses do you inhabit? It sounds as if you had bought the town."

"Well, well," said he, laughing, "we are driving to the house where I usually live. It suits us very well, though I have not been able to get all the rooms furnished yet. Then I have a little farm of a few hundred acres just outside the city. It is a pleasant place for the week ends, and we send the nurse and the child——"

"My dear chap, I did not know that you had started a family!"

"Yes, it's an infernal nuisance; but still the fact remains. We get our butter and things from the farm. Then, of course, I have my house of business in the heart of the city."

"Consulting and waiting room, I suppose?"

He looked at me with a sort of half vexed, half amused expression. "You cannot rise to a situation, Munro," said he. "I never met a fellow with such a stodgy imagination. I'd trust you to describe a thing when you have seen it, but never to build up an idea of it beforehand."

"What's the trouble now?" I asked.

"Well, I have written to you about my practice, and I've wired to you about it, and here you sit asking me if I work it in two rooms. I'll have to hire the market square before I've finished, and then I won't have space to wag my elbows. Can your imagination rise to a great house with people waiting in every room, jammed in as tight as they'll fit, and two layers of them squatting in the cellar? Well, that's my house of business on an

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average day. The folk come in from the county fifty miles off, and eat bread and treacle on the doorstep, so as to be first in when the housekeeper comes down. The medical officer of health made an official complaint of the overcrowding of my waiting-rooms. They wait in the stables, and sit along the racks and under the horses' bellies. I'll turn some of 'em on to you, my boy, and then you'll know a little more about it."

Well, all this puzzled me a good deal, as you can imagine, Harold; for, making every allowance for Cullingworth's inflated way of talking, there must be something at the back of it. I was just thinking to myself that I must keep my head cool, and have a look at everything with my own eyes, when the carriage pulled up and we got out.

"This is my little place," said Cullingworth.

It was the corner house of a line of fine buildings, and looked to me much more like a good-sized hotel than a private mansion. It had a broad sweep of steps leading to the door, and towered away up to five or six stories, with pinnacles and a flagstaff on the top. As a matter of fact, I learned that before Cullingworth took it, it had been one of the chief clubs in the town, but the committee had abandoned it on account of the heavy rent. A smart maid opened the door; and a moment later I was shaking hands with Mrs. Cullingworth, who was all kindness and cordiality. She has, I think, forgotten the little Avonmouth business, when her husband and I fell out.

The inside of the house was even huger than I had thought from the look of the exterior. There were over thirty bedrooms, Cullingworth informed me, as he helped me to carry my portmanteau up-

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stairs. The hall and first stair were most excellently furnished and carpeted, but it all ran to nothing at the landing. My own bedroom had a little iron bed, and a small basin standing on a packing case. Cullingworth took a hammer from the mantel-piece, and began to knock in nails behind the door.

"These will do to hang your clothes on," said he; "you don't mind roughing it a little until we get things in order?"

"Not in the least."

"You see," he explained, "there's no good my putting a forty-pound suite into a bedroom, and then having to chuck it all out of the window in order to make room for a hundred-pound one. No sense in that, Munro! Eh, what! I'm going to furnish this house as no house has ever been furnished. By Crums! I'll bring the folk from a hundred miles round just to have leave to look at it. But I must do it room by room. Come down with me and look at the dining-room. You must be hungry after your journey."

It really was furnished in a marvellous way—nothing flash, and everything magnificent. The carpet was so rich that my feet seemed to sink into it as into deep moss. The soup was on the table, and Mrs. Cullingworth sitting down, but he kept hauling me round to look at something else.

"Go on, Hetty," he cried over his shoulder. "I just want to show Munro this. Now, these plain dining-room chairs, what d'you think they cost each? Eh, what?"

"Five pounds," said I at a venture.

"Exactly!" he cried, in great delight; "thirty pounds for the six. You hear, Hetty! Munro



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guessed the price first shot. Now, my boy, what for the pair of curtains?"

They were a magnificent pair of stamped crimson velvet, with a two-foot gilt cornice above them. I thought that I had better not imperil my newly gained reputation by guessing.

"Eighty pounds!" he roared, slapping them with the back of his hand. "Eighty pounds, Munro! What d'ye think of that? Everything that I have in this house is going to be of the best. Why, look at this waiting-maid! Did you ever see a neater one?"

He swung the girl toward me by the arm.

"Don't be silly, Jimmy," said Mrs. Cullingworth mildly, while he roared with laughter, with all his fangs flashing under his bristling moustache. The girl edged closer to her mistress, looking half-frightened and half-angry.

"All right, Mary, no harm!" he cried. "Sit down, Munro, old chap. Get a bottle of champagne, Mary, and we'll drink to more luck."

Well, we had a very pleasant little dinner. It is never slow if Cullingworth is about. He is one of those men who make a kind of magnetic atmosphere, so that you feel exhilarated and stimulated in their presence. His mind is so nimble and his thoughts so extravagant, that your own break away from their usual grooves, and surprise you by their activity. You feel pleased at your own inventiveness and originality, when you are really like the wren when it took a lift on the eagle's shoulder. Old Peterson, you remember, used to have a similar effect upon you in the Linlithgow days.

In the middle of dinner he plunged off, and came

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back with a round bag about the size of a pomegranate in his hand.

"What d'ye think this is, Munro? Eh?"

"I have no idea."

"Our day's take. Eh, Hetty?" He undid a string, and in an instant a pile of gold and silver rattled down upon the cloth, the coins whirling and clinking among the dishes. One rolled off the table and was retrieved by the maid from some distant corner.

"What is it, Mary? A half sovereign? Put it in your pocket. What did the lot come to, Hetty?"

"Thirty-one pound eight."

"You see, Munro! One day's work." He plunged his hand into his trouser pocket and brought out a pile of sovereigns which he balanced in his palm. "Look at that, laddie. Rather different from my Avonmouth form, eh? What?"

"It will be good news for them," I suggested.

He was scowling at me in an instant with all his old ferocity. You cannot imagine a more savage-looking creature than Cullingworth is when his temper goes wrong. He gets a perfectly fiendish expression in his light blue eyes, and all his hair bristles up like a striking cobra. He isn't a beauty at his best, but at his worst he's really phenomenal. At the first danger signal his wife had ordered the maid from the room.

"What rot you do talk, Munro!" he cried. "Do you suppose I am going to cripple myself for years by letting those debts hang on to me?"

"I understood that you had promised," said I. "Still, of course, it is no business of mine."

"I should hope not," he cried. "A tradesman

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stands to win or to lose. He allows a margin for bad debts. I would have paid it if I could. I couldn't, and so I wiped the slate clean. No one in his senses would dream of spending all that I make in Bradfield upon the tradesmen of Avonmouth."

"Suppose they come down upon you?"

"Well, we'll see about that when they do. Meanwhile I am paying ready money for every mortal thing that comes up the door steps. They think so well of me here that I could have had the whole place furnished like a palace from the drain pipes to the flagstaff, only I determined to take each room in turn when I was ready for it. There's nearly four hundred pounds under this one ceiling."

There came a tap at the door, and in walked a boy in buttons.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Duncan wishes to see you."

"Give my compliments to Mr. Duncan, and tell him he may go to the devil!"

"My dear Jimmy!" cried Mrs. Cullingworth.

"Tell him I am at dinner; and if all the kings in Europe were waiting in the hall I wouldn't cross that door mat to see them."

The boy vanished, but was back in an instant.

"Please, sir, he won't go."

"Won't go! What d'you mean?" Cullingworth sat with his mouth open and his knife and fork sticking up. "What d'you mean, you brat? What are you boggling about?"

"It's his bill, sir," said the frightened boy.

Cullingworth's face grew dusky, and the veins began to swell on his forehead.

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"His bill, eh! Look here!" He took his watch out and laid it on the table. "It's two minutes to eight. At eight I'm coming out, and if I find him there I'll strew the street with him. Tell him I'll shred him over the parish. He has two minutes to save his life in, and one of them is nearly gone."

The boy bolted from the room, and in an instant afterward we heard the bang of the front door, with a clatter of steps down the stairs. Cullingworth lay back in his chair and roared until the tears shone on his eyelashes, while his wife quivered all over with sympathetic merriment.

"I'll drive him mad," Cullingworth sobbed at last. "He's a nervous, chicken-livered kind of man; and when I look at him he turns the colour of putty. If I pass his shop I usually just drop in and stand and look at him. I never speak, but just look. It paralyses him. Sometimes the shop is full of people; but it is just the samé."

"Who is he, then?" I asked.

"He's my corn merchant. I was saying that I paid my tradesmen as I go, but he is the only exception. He has done me once or twice, you see; and so I try to take it out of him. By the way, you might send him down twenty pounds to-morrow, Hetty. It's time for an instalment."

What a gossip you will think me, Harold! But when I begin, my memory brings everything back so clearly, and I write on and on almost unconsciously. Besides, this fellow is such a mixture of qualities, that I could never give you any idea of him by myself; and so I just try to repeat to you what he says, and what he does, so that you may build up your own picture of the man. I know

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that he has always interested you, and that he does so more now than ever since our fates have drawn us together again.

After dinner, we went into the back room, which was the most extraordinary contrast to the front one, having only a plain deal table, and half a dozen kitchen chairs scattered about on a linoleum floor. At one end was an electric battery and a big magnet. At the other, a packing case with several pistols and a litter of cartridges upon it. A rook rifle was leaning up against it, and looking round I saw that the walls were all pocked with bullet marks.

"What's this, then?" I asked, rolling my eyes round.

"Hetty, what's this?" he asked, with his pipe in his hand and his head cocked sideways.

"Naval supremacy and the command of the seas," said she, like a child repeating a lesson.

"That's it!" he shouted, stabbing at me with the amber. "Naval supremacy and command of the seas. It's all here right under your nose. I tell you, Munro, I could go to Switzerland tomorrow, and I could say to them—'Look here, you haven't got a seaboard and you haven't got a port; but just find me a ship, and hoist your flag on it, and I'll give you every ocean under heaven. I'd sweep the seas until there wasn't a match-box floating on them. Or I could make them over to a limited company, and join the board after allotment. I hold the salt water in the cup of this hand, every drop of it.'"

His wife put her hands on his shoulder with admiration in her eyes. I turned to knock out my pipe, and grinned over the grate.

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"Oh, you may grin," said he. (He was wonderfully quick at spotting what you were doing.) "You'll grin a little wider when you see the dividends coming in. What's the value of that magnet?"

"A pound?"

"A million pounds. Not a penny under. And dirt cheap to the nation that buys it. I shall let it go at that, though I could make ten times as much if I held on. I shall take it up to the First Lord of the Admiralty in a week or two; and if he seems to be a civil deserving sort of person I shall do business with him. It's not every day, Munro, that a man comes into his office with the Atlantic under one arm and the Pacific under the other. Eh, what?"

I knew it would make him savage, but I lay back in my chair and laughed until I was tired. His wife looked at me reproachfully; but he, after a moment of blackness, burst out laughing also, stamping up and down the room and waving his arms.

"Of course it seems absurd to you," he cried. "Well, I daresay it would to me if any other fellow had worked it out. But you may take my word for it that it's all right. Hetty here will answer for it. Won't you, Hetty?"

"It's splendid, my dear."

"Now I'll show you, Munro. What an unbelieving Jew you are, trying to look interested, and giggling at the back of your throat! In the first place, I have discovered a method—which I won't tell you—of increasing the attractive power of a magnet a hundredfold. Have you grasped that?"

"Yes."

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"Very good. You are also aware, I presume, that modern projectiles are either made of or tipped with steel. It may possibly have come to your ears that magnets attract steel. Permit me now to show you a small experiment." He bent over his apparatus, and I suddenly heard the snapping of electricity. "This," he continued, going across to the packing case, "is a saloon pistol, and will be exhibited in the museums of the next century as being the weapon with which the new era was inaugurated. Into the breech I place a Boxer cartridge, specially provided for experimental purposes with a steel bullet. I aim point blank at the dab of red sealing-wax upon the wall, which is four inches above the magnet. I am an absolutely dead shot. I fire. You will now advance, and satisfy yourself that the bullet is flattened upon the end of the magnet, after which you will apologise to me for that grin."

I looked, and it certainly was as he had said.

"I'll tell you what I would do," he cried. "I am prepared to put that magnet in Hetty's bonnet, and to let you fire six shots straight at her face. How's that for a test? You wouldn't mind, Hetty? Eh, what!"

I don't think she would have objected, but I hastened to disclaim any share in such an experiment.

"Of course, you see that the whole thing is to scale. My warship of the future carries at her prow and stern a magnet which shall be as much larger than that as the big shell will be larger than this tiny bullet. Or I might have a separate raft, possibly, to carry my apparatus. My ship goes into action. What happens then, Munro? Eh, what!"

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Every shot fired at her goes smack on to the magnet. There's a reservoir below into which they drop when the electric circuit is broken. After every action they are sold by auction for old metal, and the result divided as prize money among the crew. But think of it, man! I tell you it is an absolute impossibility for a shot to strike any ship which is provided with my apparatus. And then look at the cheapness. You don't want armour. You want nothing. Any ship that floats becomes invulnerable with one of these. The warship of the future will cost anything from seven pound ten. You're grinning again; but if you give me a magnet and a Brixton trawler with a seven-pounder gun I'll show sport to the finest battle-ship afloat."

"Well, there must be some flaw about this," I suggested. "If your magnet is so strong as all that, you would have your own broadside booming back upon you."

"Not a bit of it! There's a big difference between a shot flying away from you with all its muzzle velocity, and another one which is coming toward you and only needs a slight deflection to strike the magnet. Besides, by breaking the circuit I can take off the influence when I am firing my own broadside. Then I connect, and instantly become invulnerable."

"And your nails and screws?"

"The warship of the future will be bolted together by wood."

Well, he would talk of nothing else the whole evening but of this wonderful invention of his. Perhaps there is nothing in it—probably there is not; and yet it illustrates the many-sided nature of the man, that he should not say one word about his



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phenomenal success here—of which I am naturally most anxious to hear—not a word either upon the important subject of our partnership, but will think and talk of nothing but this extraordinary naval idea. In a week he will have tossed it aside in all probability, and be immersed in some plan for reuniting the Jews and settling them in Madagascar. Yet from all he has said, and all I have seen, there can be no doubt that he has in some inexplicable way made a tremendous hit, and to-morrow I shall let you know all about it. Come what may, I am delighted that I came, for things promise to be interesting. Regard this not as the end of a letter, but of a paragraph. You shall have the conclusion to-morrow, or on Thursday at the latest. Good-bye, and my remembrance to Lawrence if you see him. How's your friend from Yale?

## VII

### .1 THE PARADE, BRADFIELD, 9th March, 1882.

WELL, you see I am as good as my word, Harold; and here is a full account of this queer little sample gouged out of real life, never to be seen, I should fancy, by any eye save your own. I have written to Horton also, and of course to my mother; but I don't go into detail with them, as I have got into the way of doing with you. You keep on assuring me that you like it; so on your own head be it if you find my experiences gradually developing into a weariness.

When I woke in the morning, and looked round at the bare walls and the basin on the packing case, I hardly knew where I was. Cullingworth came charging into the room in his dressing gown, however, and roused me effectually by putting his hands on the rail at the end of the bed, and throwing a somersault over it which brought his heels on to my pillow with a thud. He was in great spirits, and, squatting on the bed, he held forth about his plans while I dressed.

"I tell you one of the first things I mean to do, Munro," said he. "I mean to have a paper of my own. We'll start a weekly paper here, you and I, and we'll make them sit up all round. We'll have an organ of our own, just like every French politician. If any one crosses us we'll make them wish they had never been born. Eh, what, laddie? what d'you think? So clever, Munro, that every-

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body's bound to read it, and so scathing that it will just fetch out blisters every time. Don't you think we could?"

"What politics?" I asked.

"Oh, curse the politics! Red pepper well rubbed in, that's my idea of a paper. Call it the *Scorpion*. Chaff the Mayor and the Council until they call a meeting and hang themselves. I'd do the snappy paragraphs, and you would do the fiction and poetry. I thought about it during the night, and Hetty has written to Murdoch's to get an estimate for the printing. We might get our first number out this day week."

"My dear chap!" I gasped.

"I want you to start a novel this morning. You won't get many patients at first, and you'll have lots of time."

"But I never wrote a line in my life."

"A properly balanced man can do anything he sets his hand to. He's got every possible quality inside him, and all he wants is the will to develop it."

"Could you write a novel yourself?" I asked.

"Of course I could. Such a novel, Munro, that when they'd read the first chapter the folk would just sit groaning until the second came out. They'd wait in rows outside my door in the hope of hearing what was coming next. By Crums, I'll go and begin it now!" And, with another somersault over the end of the bed, he rushed from the room, with the tassels of his dressing gown flying behind him.

I daresay you've quite come to the conclusion by this time that Cullingworth is simply an interesting pathological study—a man in the first stage of lunacy or general paralysis. You might not be so

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sure about it if you were in close contact with him. He justifies his wildest flights by what he does. It sounds grotesque when put down in black and white; but then it would have sounded equally grotesque a year ago if he had said that he would build up a huge practice in a twelvemonth. Now we see that he has done it. His possibilities are immense. He has such huge energy at the back of his fertility of invention. I am afraid, on thinking over all that I have written to you, that I may have given you a false impression of the man by dwelling too much on those incidents in which he has shown the strange and violent side of his character, and omitting the stretches between where his wisdom and judgment have had a chance. His conversation when he does not fly off at a tangent is full of pith and idea. "The greatest monument ever erected to Napeolon Buonaparte was the British National Debt," said he yesterday. Again, "We must never forget that the principal export of Great Britain to the United States is the United States." Again, speaking of Christianity, "What is intellectually unsound cannot be morally sound." He shoots off a whole column of aphorisms in a single evening. I should like to have a man with a note-book always beside him to gather up his waste. No; you must not let me give you a false impression of the man's capacity. On the other hand, it would be dishonest to deny that I think him thoroughly unscrupulous, and full of very sinister traits. I am much mistaken, however, if he has not fine strata in his nature. He is capable of rising to heights as well as of sinking to depths.

Well, when we had breakfasted we got into the carriage and drove off to the place of business.

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"I suppose you are surprised at Hetty coming with us," said Cullingworth, slapping me on the knee. "Hetty, Munro is wondering what the devil you are here for, only he is too polite to ask."

In fact, it *had* struck me as rather strange that she should, as a matter of course, accompany us to business.

"You'll see when we get there," he cried chuckling. "We run this affair on lines of our own."

It was not very far, and we soon found ourselves outside a square whitewashed building, which had a huge "Dr. Cullingworth" on a great brass plate at the side of the door. Underneath was printed "May be consulted gratis from ten to four." The door was open, and I caught a glimpse of a crowd of people waiting in the hall.

"How many here?" asked Cullingworth of the page boy.

"A hundred and forty, sir."

"All the waiting rooms full?"

"Yes, sir."

"Courtyard full?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stable full?"

"Yes, sir."

"Coach-house full?"

"There's still room in the coach-house, sir."

"Ah, I'm sorry we haven't got a crowded day for you, Munro," said he. "Of course, we can't command these things, and must take them as they come. Now then, now then, make a gangway, can't you?"—this to his patients. "Come here and see the waiting-room. Pooh! what an atmosphere! Why on earth can't you open the windows for yourselves? I never saw such folk!

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There are thirty people in this room, Munro, and not one with sense enough to open a window to save himself from suffocation."

"I tried, sir, but there's a screw through the sash," cried one fellow.

"Ah, my boy, you'll never get on in the world if you can't open a window without raising a sash," said Cullingworth, slapping him on the shoulder. He took the man's umbrella and stuck it through two of the panes of glass.

"That's the way!" he said. "Boy, see that the screw is taken out. Now then, Munro, come along and we'll get to work."

We went up a wooden stair, uncarpeted, leaving every room beneath us, as far as I could see, crowded with patients. At the top was a bare passage, which had two rooms opposite to each other at one end, and a single one at the other.

"This is my consulting room," said he, leading the way into one of these. It was a good-sized square chamber, perfectly empty save for two plain wooden chairs and an unpainted table with two books and a stethoscope upon it. "It doesn't look like four or five thousand a year, does it? Now, there is an exactly similar one opposite which you can have for yourself. I'll send across any surgical cases which may turn up. To-day, however, I think you had better stay with me, and see how I work things."

"I should very much like to," said I.

"There are one or two elementary rules to be observed in the way of handling patients," he remarked, seating himself on the table and swinging his legs. "The most obvious is that you must never let them see that you want them. It should

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be pure condescension on your part seeing them at all; and the more difficulties you throw in the way of it, the more they think of it. Break your patients in early, and keep them well to heel. Never make the fatal mistake of being polite to them. Many foolish young men fall into this habit, and are ruined in consequence. Now, this is my form." He sprang to the door, and putting his two hands to his mouth he bellowed: "Stop your confounded jabbering down there! I might as well be living above a poultry show! There, you see," he added to me, "they will think ever so much more of me for that."

"But don't they get offended?" I asked.

"I'm afraid not. I have a name for this sort of thing now, and they have come to expect it. But an offended patient—I mean a thoroughly insulted one—is the finest advertisement in the world. If it is a woman, she runs clacking about among her friends until your name becomes a household word, and they all pretend to sympathise with her, and agree among themselves that you must be a remarkably discerning man. I quarrelled with one man about the state of his gall duct, and it ended by my throwing him down the stairs. What was the result? He talked so much about it that the whole village from which he came, sick and well, trooped to see me. The little country practitioner who had been buttering them up for a quarter of a century found that he might as well put up his shutters. It's human nature, my boy, and you can't alter it. Eh, what? You make yourself cheap and you become cheap. You put a high price on yourself and they rate you at that price. Suppose I set up in Harley Street to-morrow, and

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made it all nice and easy, with hours from ten to three, do you think I should get a patient? I might starve first. How would I work it? I should let it be known that I only saw patients from midnight until two in the morning, and that bald-headed people must pay double. That would set people talking, their curiosity would be stimulated, and in four months the street would be blocked all night. Eh, what? laddie, you'd go yourself. That's my principle here. I often come in of a morning and send them all about their business, tell them I'm going off to the country for a day. I turn away forty pounds, and it's worth four hundred as an advertisement!"

"But I understood from the plate that the consultations were gratis."

"So they are, but they have to pay for the medicine. And if a patient wishes to come out of turn he has to pay half a guinea for the privilege. There are generally about twenty every day who would rather pay that than wait several hours. But, mind you, Munro, don't you make any mistake about this! All this would go for nothing if you had not something solid behind—I cure them. That's the point. I take cases that others have despaired of, and I cure them right off. All the rest is only to bring them here. But once here I keep them on my merits. It would all be a flash in the pan but for that. Now, come along and see Hetty's department."

We walked down the passage to the other room. It was elaborately fitted up as a dispensary, and there with a *chic* little apron Mrs. Cullingworth was busy making up pills. With her sleeves turned up and a litter of glasses and bottles all



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round her, she was laughing away like a child among its toys.

"The best dispenser in the world!" cried Cullingworth, patting her on the shoulder. "You see how I do it, Munro. I write on a label what the prescription is, and make a sign which shows how much is to be charged. The man comes along the passage and passes the label through the pigeon-hole. Hetty makes it up, passes out the bottle, and takes the money. Now, come on and clear some of these folk out of the house."

It is impossible for me to give you any idea of that long line of patients, filing hour after hour through the unfurnished room, and departing, some amused, and some frightened, with their labels in their hands. Cullingworth's antics are beyond belief. I laughed until I thought the wooden chair under me would have come to pieces. He roared, he raved, he swore, he pushed them about, slapped them on the back, shoved them against the wall, and occasionally rushed out to the head of the stair to address them *en masse*. At the same time, behind all this tomfoolery, I, watching his prescriptions, could see a quickness of diagnosis, a scientific insight, and a daring and unconventional use of drugs, which satisfied me that he was right in saying that, under all this charlatanism, there lay solid reasons for his success. Indeed, "charlatanism" is a misapplied word in this connection; for it would describe the doctor who puts on an artificial and conventional manner with his patients, rather than one who is absolutely frank and true to his own extraordinary nature.

To some of his patients he neither said one word nor did he allow them to say one. With a loud

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"hush" he would rush at them, thump them on the chests, listen to their hearts, write their labels, and then run them out of the room by their shoulders. One poor old lady he greeted with a perfect scream. "You've been drinking too much tea!" he cried. "You are suffering from tea poisoning!" Then, without allowing her to get a word in, he clutched her by her crackling black mantle, dragged her up to the table, and held out a copy of "Taylor's Medical Jurisprudence" which was lying there. "Put your hand on the book," he thundered, "and swear that for fourteen days you will drink nothing but cocoa." She swore with upturned eyes, and was instantly whirled off, with her label in her hand, to the dispensary. I could imagine that to the last day of her life, the old lady would talk of her interview with Cullingworth; and I could well understand how the village from which she came would send fresh recruits to block up his waiting rooms.

Another portly person was seized by the two armholes of his waistcoat, just as he was opening his mouth to explain his symptoms, and was rushed backward down the passage, down the stairs, and finally into the street, to the immense delight of the assembled patients. "You eat too much, drink too much, and sleep too much," Cullingworth roared after him. "Knock down a policeman, and come again when they let you out." Another patient complained of a "sinking feeling." "My dear," said he, "take your medicine; and if that does no good, swallow the cork, for there is nothing better when you are sinking."

As far as I could judge, the bulk of the patients looked upon a morning at Cullingworth's as a most

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enthraling public entertainment, tempered only by a thrill lest it should be their turn next to be made an exhibition of.

Well, with half an hour for lunch, this extraordinary business went on till a quarter to four in the afternoon. When the last patient had departed, Cullingworth led the way into the dispensary, where all the fees had been arranged upon the counter in the order of their value. There were seventeen half-sovereigns, seventy-three shillings, and forty-six florins; or thirty-two pounds eight and sixpence in all. Cullingworth counted it up, and then mixing the gold and silver into one heap, he sat running his fingers through it and playing with it. Finally, he raked it into the canvas bag which I had seen the night before, and lashed the neck up with a boot-lace.

We walked home, and that walk struck me as the most extraordinary part of all that extraordinary day. Cullingworth paraded slowly through the principal streets with his canvas bag, full of money, outstretched at the full length of his arm. His wife and I walked on either side, like two acolytes supporting a priest, and so we made our way solemnly homeward, the people stopping to see us pass.

"I always make a point of walking through the doctors' quarter," said Cullingworth. "We are passing through it now. They all come to their windows and gnash their teeth and dance until I am out of sight."

"Why should you quarrel with them? What is the matter with them?" I asked.

"Pooh! what's the use of being mealy-mouthed about it?" said he. "We are all trying to cut

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each other's throats, and why should we be hypocritical over it? They haven't got a good word for me, any one of them; so I like to take a rise out of them."

"I must say that I can see no sense in that. They are your brothers in the profession, with the same education and the same knowledge. Why should you take an offensive attitude toward them?"

"That's what I say, Dr. Munro," cried his wife. "It is so very unpleasant to feel that one is surrounded by enemies on every side."

"Hetty's riled because their wives wouldn't call upon her," he cried. "Look at that, my dear," jingling his bag. "That is better than having a lot of brainless women drinking tea and cackling in your drawing-room. I've had a big card printed, Munro, saying that we don't desire to increase the circle of our acquaintance. The maid has orders to show it to every suspicious person who calls."

"Why should you not make money at your practice, and yet remain on good terms with your professional brethren?" said I. "You speak as if the two things were incompatible."

"So they are. What's the good of beating about the bush, laddie? My methods are all unprofessional, and I break every law of medical etiquette as often as I can think of it. You know very well that the British Medical Association would hold up their hands in horror if it could see what you have seen to-day."

"But why not conform to professional etiquette?"

"Because I know better. My boy, I'm a doctor's son, and I've seen too much of it. I was born inside the machine, and I've seen all the wires.

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All this etiquette is a dodge for keeping the business in the hands of the older men. It's to hold the young men back, and to stop the holes by which they might slip through to the front. I've heard my father say so a score of times. He had the largest practice in Scotland, and yet he was absolutely devoid of brains. He slipped into it through seniority and decorum. No pushing, but take your turn. Very well, laddie, when you're at the top of the line, but how about it when you've just taken your place at the tail? When I'm on the top rung I shall look down and say, 'Now, you youngsters, we are going to have very strict etiquette, and I beg that you will come up very quietly and not disarrange me from my comfortable position.' At the same time, if they do what I tell them, I shall look upon them as a lot of infernal blockheads. Eh, Munro, what?"

I could only say again that I thought he took a very low view of the profession, and that I disagreed with every word he said.

"Well, my boy, you may disagree as much as you like, but if you are going to work with me you must throw etiquette to the devil!"

"I can't do that."

"Well, if you are too clean handed for the job you can clear out. We can't keep you here against your will."

I said nothing; but when we got back, I went upstairs and packed up my trunk, with every intention of going back to Yorkshire by the night train. He came up to my room, and finding what I was at, he burst into apologies which would have satisfied a more exacting man than I am.

"You shall do just exactly what you like, my

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dear chap. If you don't like my way, you may try some way of your own."

"That's fair enough," said I. "But it's a little trying to a man's self-respect if he is told to clear out every time there is a difference of opinion."

"Well, well, there was no harm meant, and it shan't occur again. I can't possibly say more than that; so come along down and have a cup of tea."

And so the matter blew over; but I very much fear, Harold, that this is the first row of a series. I have a presentiment that sooner or later my position here will become untenable. Still, I shall give it a fair trial as long as he will let me. Cullingworth is a fellow who likes to have nothing but inferiors and dependants round him. Now, I like to stand on my own legs, and think with my own mind. If he'll let me do this we'll get along very well; but if I know the man he will claim submission, which is more than I am inclined to give. He has a right to my gratitude, which I freely admit. He has found an opening for me when I badly needed one and had no immediate prospects. But still, one may pay too high a price even for that, and I should feel that I was doing so if I had to give up my individuality and my manhood.

We had an incident that evening which was so characteristic that I must tell you of it. Cullingworth has an air gun which fires little steel darts. With this he makes excellent practice at about twenty feet, the length of the back room. We were shooting at a mark after dinner, when he asked me whether I would hold a halfpenny between my finger and thumb, and allow him to shoot it out. A halfpenny not being forthcoming, he took a

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bronze medal out of his waistcoat pocket, and I held that up as a mark. "Kling!" went the air gun, and the medal rolled upon the floor.

"Plumb in the centre," said he.

"On the contrary," I answered, "you never hit it at all!"

"Never hit it! I must have hit it!"

"I am confident you didn't."

"Where's the dart, then?"

"Here," said I, holding up a bleeding forefinger, from which the tail end of the fluff with which the dart was winged was protruding.

I never saw a man so abjectly sorry for anything in my life. He used language of self-reproach which would have been extravagant if he had shot off one of my limbs. Our positions were absurdly reversed; and it was he who sat collapsed in a chair, while it was I, with the dart still in my finger, who leaned over him and laughed the matter off. Mrs. Cullingworth had run for hot water, and presently with a tweezers we got the intruder out. There was very little pain (more to-day than yesterday), but if ever you are called upon to identify my body you may look for a star at the end of my right forefinger.

When the surgery was completed (Cullingworth writhing and groaning all the time) my eyes happened to catch the medal which I had dropped, lying upon the carpet. I lifted it up and looked at it, eager to find some topic which would be more agreeable. Printed upon it was—"Presented to James Cullingworth for gallantry in saving life. Jan., 1879."

"Hullo, Cullingworth," said I. "You never told me about this!"

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He was off in an instant in his most extravagant style.

"What! the medal? Haven't you got one? I thought every one had. You prefer to be select, I suppose. It was a little boy. You've no idea the trouble I had to get him in."

"Get him out, you mean."

"My dear chap, you don't understand! Any one could get a child out. It's getting one in that's the bother. One deserves a medal for it. Then there are the witnesses, four shillings a day I had to pay them, and a quart of beer in the evenings. You see you can't pick up a child and carry it to the edge of a pier and throw it in. You'd have all sorts of complications with the parents. You must be patient and wait until you get a legitimate chance. I caught a quinsy walking up and down Avonmouth pier before I saw my opportunity. He was rather a stolid fat boy, and he was sitting on the very edge, fishing. I got the sole of my foot on to the small of his back, and shot him an incredible distance. I had some little difficulty in getting him out, for his fishing line got twice round my legs, but it all ended well, and the witnesses were as stanch as possible. The boy came up to thank me next day, and said that he was quite uninjured save for a bruise on the back. His parents always send me a brace of fowls every Christmas."

I was sitting with my finger in the hot water listening to this rigmarole. When he had finished he ran off to get his tobacco-box, and we could hear the bellowing of his laughter dwindling up the stair. I was still looking at the medal, which, from the dints all over it, had evidently been often



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used as a target, when I felt a timid touch upon my sleeve; it was Mrs. Cullingworth, who was looking earnestly at me with a very distressed expression upon her face.

"You believe far too much what James says," said she. "You don't know him in the least, Mr. Munro. You don't look at a thing from his point of view, and you will never understand him until you do. It is not, of course, that he means to say anything that is untrue; but his fancy is excited, and he is quite carried away by the humour of any idea, whether it tells against himself or not. It hurts me, Mr. Munro, to see the only man in the world toward whom he has any feeling of friendship, misunderstanding him so completely, for very often when you say nothing your face shows very clearly what you think."

I could only answer lamely that I was very sorry if I had misjudged her husband in any way, and that no one had a keener appreciation of some of his qualities than I had.

"I saw how grave you looked when he told you that absurd story about pushing a little boy into the water," she continued; and, as she spoke, she drew from somewhere in the front of her dress a much creased slip of paper. "Just glance at that, please, Mr. Munro."

It was a newspaper cutting, which gave the true account of the incident. Suffice it that it was an ice accident, and that Cullingworth had really behaved in a heroic way and had been drawn out himself insensible, with the child so clasped in his arms that it was not until he had recovered his senses that they were able to separate them. I had hardly finished reading it when we heard his step on the

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stairs ; and she, thrusting the paper back into her bosom, became in an instant the same silently watchful woman as ever.

Is he not a conundrum ? If he interests you at a distance (and I take it for granted that what you say in your letters is not merely conventional compliment) you can think how piquant he is in actual life. I must confess, however, that I can never shake off the feeling that I am living with some capricious creature who frequently growls and may possibly bite. Well, it won't be very long before I write again, and by that time I shall probably know whether I am likely to find any permanent billet here or not. I am so sorry to hear about Mrs. Swanborough's indisposition. You know that I take the deepest interest in everything that affects you. They tell me here that I am looking very fit, though I think they ought to spell it with an "a."

## VIII

I THE PARADE,  
BRADFIELD, 6th April, 1882.

I AM writing this, my dear Harold, at a little table which has been fitted up in the window of my bedroom. Every one in the house is asleep except myself; and all the noise of the city is hushed. Yet my own brain is singularly active, and I feel that I am better employed in sitting up and writing to you, than in tossing about upon my bed. I am often accused of being sleepy in the daytime, but every now and then Nature gets level by making me abnormally wakeful at night.

Are you conscious of the restful influence which the stars exert? To me they are the most soothing things in Nature. I am proud to say that I don't know the name of one of them. The glamour and romance would pass away from them if they were all classified and ticketed in one's brain. But when a man is hot and flurried, and full of his own little ruffled dignities and infinitesimal misfortunes, then a star bath is the finest thing in the world. They are so big, and so serene and so lovely. They tell me that the interplanetary spaces are full of the débris of shattered asteroids; so, perhaps, even among them there are such things as disease and death. Yet just to look at them must remind a man of what a bacillus of a thing he is—the whole human race like some sprinkling of impalpable powder upon the surface of one of the most insignificant flywheels of a monstrous machine. But

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there's order in it, Harold, there's order! And where there is order there must be mind, and where there is mind there must be sense of Justice. I don't allow that there can be any doubt as to the existence of that central Mind, or as to the possession by it of certain attributes. The stars help me to realise these. It is strange, when one looks upon them, to think that the Churches are still squabbling down here over such questions as whether the Almighty is most gratified by our emptying a teaspoonful of water over our babies' heads, or by our waiting a few years and then plunging them bodily into a tank. It would be comic if it were not so tragic.

This train of thought is the after-swell from an argument with Cullingworth this evening. He holds that the human race is deteriorating mentally and morally. He calls out at the grossness which confounds the Creator with a young Jewish Philosopher. I tried to show him that this is no proof of degeneration, since the Jewish Philosopher at least represented a moral idea, and was therefore on an infinitely higher plane than the sensual divinities of the ancients. His own views of the Creator seem to me to be a more evident degeneration. He declares that looking round at Nature he can see nothing but ruthlessness and brutality. "Either the Creator is not all-powerful, or else He is not all-good," says he. "Either He can stop these atrocities and won't, in which case He is not all-good; or else He would stop them but can't, in which case He is not all-powerful." It was a difficult dilemma for a man who professes to stick to reason to get out of. Of course, if you plead faith, you can always slip out of anything. I was forced

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to get behind a corner of that buckler with which you have so often turned my own thrusts. I said that the dilemma arose from our taking it for granted that that which seemed evil really *was* evil. "It lies with you to prove that it isn't," said he. "We may hope that it isn't," said I. "Wait until some one tells you that you have cancer of the pyloric end of the stomach," said he; and he shouted it out again every time I tried to renew the argument.

But in all soberness, I really do think, Harold, that very much which seems to be saddest in life might be very different if we could focus it properly. I tried to give you my views about this in the case of drink and immorality. But physically, I fancy that it applies more obviously than it does morally. All the physical evils of life seem to culminate in death; and yet death, as I have seen it, has not been a painful or terrible process. In many cases, a man dies without having incurred nearly as much pain, during the whole of his fatal illness, as would have arisen from a whitlow or an abscess of the jaw. And it is often those deaths which seem most terrible to the onlooker, which are least so to the sufferer. When a man is overtaken by an express and shivered into fragments, or when he drops from a fourth-floor window and is smashed into a bag of splinters, the unfortunate spectators are convulsed with horror, and find a text for pessimistic views about the Providence which allows such things to be. And yet, it is very doubtful whether the deceased, could his tongue be loosened, would remember anything at all about the matter. We know, as students of medicine, that though pain is usually associated with cancers and with

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abdominal complaints; still, in the various fevers, in apoplexy, in blood poisonings, in lung diseases, and, in short, in the greater proportion of serious maladies, there is little suffering.

I remember how struck I was when first I saw the actual cautery applied in a case of spinal disease. The white-hot iron was pressed firmly into the patient's back, without the use of any anæsthetic, and what with the sight and the nauseating smell of burned flesh I felt faint and ill. Yet, to my astonishment, the patient never flinched nor moved a muscle of his face, and on my inquiring afterward, he assured me that the proceeding was absolutely painless, a remark which was corroborated by the surgeon. "The nerves are so completely and instantaneously destroyed," he explained, "that they have no time to convey a painful impression." But then if this be so, what becomes of all the martyrs at the stake, and the victims of Red Indians, and other poor folk over whose sufferings and constancy we have wondered? It may be that Providence is not only not cruel itself, but will not allow man to be cruel either. Do your worst, and it will step in with a 'No, I won't allow this poor child of mine to be hurt;' and then comes the dulling of the nerve and the lethargy which takes the victim out of the reach of the tormentor. David Livingstone under the claws of the lion must have looked like an object lesson of the evil side of things, and yet he has left it upon record that his own sensations were pleasurable rather than otherwise. I am well convinced that if the newly-born infant and the man who had just died could compare their experiences, the former would have proved to be the sufferer. It is

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not for nothing that the first thing the new-comer into this planet does is to open its toothless mouth and protest energetically against fate.

Cullingworth has written a parable which makes a paragraph for our wonderful new weekly paper.

"The little cheese mites held debate," he says, "as to who made the cheese. Some thought that they had no data to go upon, and some that it had come together by a solidification of vapour, or by the centrifugal attraction of atoms. A few surmised that the platter might have something to do with it; but the wisest of them could not deduce the existence of a cow."

We are at one, he and I, in thinking that the infinite is beyond our perception. We differ only in that he sees evil and I see good in the working of the universe. Ah, what a mystery it all is! Let us be honest and humble and think kindly of each other. There's a line of stars all winking at me over the opposite roof—winking slyly at the silly little person with the pen and paper who is so earnest about what he can never understand.

Well, now, I'll come back to something practical. It is nearly a month since I wrote to you last. The date is impressed upon my memory because it was the day after Cullingworth shot the air-dart into my finger. The place festered and prevented my writing to any one for a week or two, but it is all right again now. I have ever so much of different sorts to tell you, but really when I come to think of it, it does not amount to very much after all.

First of all, about the practice. I told you that I was to have a room immediately opposite to Cullingworth's, and that all the surgical cases were to

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be turned over to me. For a few days I had nothing to do, except to listen to him romping and scuffling with his patients, or making speeches to them from the top of the stairs. However, a great "Dr. Stark Munro, Surgeon," has been affixed to the side of the door downstairs, opposite Cullingworth's plate; and a proud man was I when first my eyes lit upon it. On the fourth day, however, in came a case. He little knew that he was the first that I had ever had all to myself in my life. Perhaps he would not have looked quite so cheerful if he had realised it.

Poor chap, he had little enough to be cheery over either. He was an old soldier who had lost a good many teeth, but who had continued to find room between his nose and chin for a short black clay pipe. Lately there appeared a small sore on his nose which had spread, and become crusted. On feeling it I found it as hard as a streak of glue, with constant, darting pains passing through it. Of course, there could be no question as to diagnosis. It was epitheliomatous cancer, caused by the irritation of the hot tobacco smoke. I sent him back to his village, and two days after I drove over in Cullingworth's dog-cart, and removed the growth. I only got a sovereign for it. But it may be a nucleus for cases. The old fellow did most admirably, and he has just been in (with a most aristocratic curl to his nostrils) to tell me that he has bought a box full of churchwardens. It was my first operation, and I daresay I was more nervous about it than my patient, but the result has given me confidence. I have fully made up my mind to let nothing pass me. Come what may, I am prepared to do it. Why should a man



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wait? Of course, I know that many men do; but surely one's nerve is more likely to be strong and one's knowledge fresh now than in twenty years.

Cases came dribbling in from day to day—all very poor people, and able to pay very poor fees—but still most welcome to me. The first week I took (including that operation fee) one pound seventeen and sixpence. The second, I got two pounds exactly. The third, I had two pounds five, and now I find that this last week has brought in two pounds eighteen; so I am moving in the right direction. Of course, it compares absurdly enough with Cullingworth's twenty pounds a day, and my little quiet back-water seems a strange contrast to the noisy stream which pours for ever through his room. Still, I am quite satisfied, and I have no doubt at all that his original estimate of three hundred pounds for the first year will be amply justified. It would be a pleasant thing to think that if anything were really to happen at home, I should be able to be of some use to them. If things go on as they have begun, I shall soon have my feet firmly planted.

I was compelled, by the way, to forego an opening which a few months ago would have been the very summit of my ambition. You must know (possibly I told you), that immediately after I passed, I put my name down as a candidate for a surgeonship on the books of several of the big steamship lines. It was done as a forlorn hope, for a man has usually to wait several years before his turn comes round. Well, just a week after I started here, I got a telegram one night from Liverpool: "Join the *Decia* to-morrow as surgeon, not later than eight in the evening." It was from Staunton

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& Merivale, the famous South American firm, and the *Decia* is a fine 6,000-ton passenger boat, doing the round journey by Bahia and Buenos Ayres to Rio and Valparaiso. I had a bad quarter of an hour, I can tell you. I don't think I was ever so undecided about anything in my life. Cullingworth was dead against my going, and his influence carried the day.

"My dear chap," said he, "you'd knock down the chief mate, and he'd spread you out with a handspike. You'd get tied by your thumbs to the rigging. You'd be fed on stinking water and putrid biscuits. I've been reading a novel about the merchant service, and I know."

When I laughed at his ideas of modern seagoing, he tried another line.

"You're a bigger fool than I take you for if you go," said he. "Why, what can it lead to? All the money you earn goes to buy a blue coat, and daub it with lace. You think you're bound for Valparaiso, and you find yourself at the poor-house. You've got a rare opening here, and everything ready to your hand. You'll never get such another again."

And so it ended by my letting them have a wire to say that I could not come. It is strange when you come to a point where the road of your life obviously divides, and you take one turning or the other after vainly trying to be sure about the finger-post. I think after all I chose rightly. A ship's surgeon must remain a ship's surgeon, while here there is no horizon to my possibilities.

As to Cullingworth, he is booming along as merrily as ever. You say in your last, that what you cannot understand is how he got his hold of the public in so short a time. That is just the point

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which I have found it hard to get light upon. He told me that after his first coming he had not a patient for a month, and that he was so disheartened that he very nearly made a moonlight exodus. At last, however, a few cases came his way—and he made such extraordinary cures of them, or else impressed them so by his eccentricity, that they would do nothing but talk of him. Some of his wonderful results got into the local press, though, after my Avonmouth experience, I should not like to guarantee that he did not himself convey them there. He showed me an almanac, which had a great circulation in the district. It had an entry sandwiched in this way :

Aug. 15. Reform Bill passed 1867.

Aug. 16. Birth of Julius Cæsar.

Aug. 17. Extraordianry cure by Dr. Cullingworth of a case of dropsy in Bradfield, 1881.

Aug. 18. Battle of Gravelotte, 1870.

It reads as if it were one of the landmarks of the latter half of the century. I asked him how on earth it got there; but I could only learn that the woman was fifty-six inches round the waist, and that he had treated her with elaterium.

That leads me to another point. You ask me whether his cures are really remarkable, and, if so, what his system is. I answer unhesitatingly, that his cures are very remarkable indeed, and that I look upon him as a sort of Napoleon of medicine. His view is that the pharmacopœial doses are in nearly every instance much too low. Excessive timidity has cut down the dose until it has ceased to produce a real effect upon the disease. Medical men, according to his view, have been afraid of producing a poi-

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sonous effect with their drugs. With him, on the contrary, the whole art of medicine lies in judicious poisoning, and when the case is serious, his remedies are heroic. Where, in epilepsy, I should have given thirty-grain doses of bromide or chloral every four hours, he would give two drachms every three. No doubt it will seem to you very kill-or-cure, and I am myself afraid that a succession of coroners' inquests may check Cullingworth's career; but hitherto he has had no public scandal, while the cases which he has brought back to life have been numerous. He is the most fearless fellow. I have seen him pour opium into a dysenteric patient until my hair bristled. But either his knowledge or his luck always brings him out right.

Then there are other cures which depend, I think, upon his own personal magnetism. He is so robust and loud-voiced and hearty that a weak nervous patient goes away from him re-charged with vitality. He is so perfectly confident that he can cure them, that he makes them perfectly confident that they can be cured; and you know how in nervous cases the mind reacts upon the body. If he chose to preserve crutches and sticks, as they do in the mediæval churches, he might, I am sure, paper his consulting room with them. A favourite device of his with an impressionable patient is to name the exact hour of their cure. "My dear," he will say, swaying some girl about by the shoulders, with his nose about three inches from hers, "you'll feel better to-morrow at a quarter to ten, and at twenty past you'll be as well as ever you were in your life. Now, keep your eye on the clock, and see if I am not right." Next day, as likely as not, her mother will be in, weeping tears of joy; and another mira-

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cle has been added to Cullingworth's record. It may smell of quackery, but it is exceedingly useful to the patient.

Still I must confess that there is nothing about Cullingworth which jars me so much as the low view which he takes of our profession. I can never reconcile myself to his ideas, and yet I can never convert him to mine; so there will be a chasm there which sooner or later may open to divide us altogether. He will not acknowledge any philanthropic side to the question. A profession, in his view, is a means of earning a livelihood, and the doing good to our fellow-mortals is quite a secondary one.

"Why the devil should we do all the good, Munro?" he shouts. "Eh, what? A butcher would do good to the race, would he not, if he served his chops out gratis through the window? He'd be a real benefactor; but he goes on selling them at a shilling the pound for all that. Take the case of a doctor who devotes himself to sanitary science. He flushes out drains, and keeps down infection. You call him a philanthropist! Well, I call him a traitor. That's it, Munro, a traitor and a renegade! Did you ever hear of a congress of lawyers for simplifying the law and discouraging litigation? What are the Medical Association and the General Council, and all these bodies for? Eh, laddie? For encouraging the best interests of the profession. Do you suppose they do that by making the population healthy? It's about time we had a mutiny among the general practitioners. If I had the use of half the funds which the Association has, I should spend part of them in drain-blocking, and the rest in the

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cultivation of disease germs, and the contamination of drinking water."

Of course, I told him that his views were diabolical; but, especially since that warning which I had from his wife, I discount everything that he says. He begins in earnest; but as he goes on the humour of exaggeration gets hold of him, and he winds up with things which he would never uphold in cold blood. However, the fact remains that we differ widely in our views of professional life, and I fear that we may come to grief over the question.

What do you think we have been doing lately? Building a stable—no less. Cullingworth wanted to have another one at the business place, as much, I think, for his patients as his horses; and, in his audacious way, he determined that he would build it himself. So at it we went, he, I, the coachman, Mrs. Cullingworth, and the coachman's wife. We dug foundations, got bricks in by the cartload, made our own mortar, and I think that we shall end by making a very fair job of it. It's not quite as flat-chested as we could wish; and I think that if I were a horse inside it, I should be careful about brushing against the walls; but still it will keep the wind and rain out when it is finished. Cullingworth talks of our building a new house for ourselves; but as we have three large ones already there does not seem to be any pressing need.

Talking about horses, we had no end of a fuss here the other day. Cullingworth got it into his head that he wanted a first-class riding horse; and as neither of the carriage ones would satisfy him, he commissioned a horse dealer to get him one. The man told us of a charger which one of the officers in the garrison was trying to get rid of.

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He did not conceal the fact that the reason why he wished to sell it was because he considered it to be dangerous; but he added that Captain Lucas had given £150 for it, and was prepared to sell it at £70. This excited Cullingworth, and he ordered the creature to be saddled and brought round. It was a beautiful animal, coal black, with a magnificent neck and shoulders, but with a nasty backward tilt to its ears, and an unpleasant way of looking at you. The horse dealer said that our yard was too small to try the creature in; but Cullingworth clambered up upon its back and formally took possession of it by lamming it between the ears with the bone handle of his whip. Then ensued one of the most lively ten minutes that I can remember. The beast justified his reputation; but Cullingworth, although he was no horseman, stuck to him like a limpet. Backward, forward, sideways, on his fore feet, on his hind feet, with his back curved, with his back sunk, bucking and kicking, there was nothing the creature did not try. Cullingworth was sitting alternately on his mane and on the root of his tail—never by any chance in the saddle—he had lost both stirrups, and his knees were drawn up and his heels dug into the creature's ribs, while his hands clawed at mane, saddle, or ears, whichever he saw in front of him. He kept his whip, however; and whenever the brute eased down, Cullingworth lammed him once more with the bone handle. His idea, I suppose, was to break its spirit, but he had taken a larger contract than he could carry through. The animal bunched his four feet together, ducked down his head, arched his back like a yawning cat, and gave three convulsive springs into the air. At

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the first, Cullingworth's knees were above the saddle flaps, at the second his ankles were retaining a convulsive grip, at the third he flew forward like a stone out of a sling, narrowly missed the coping of the wall, broke with his head the iron bar which held some wire netting, and toppled back with a thud into the yard. Up he bounded with the blood streaming down his face, and running into our half-finished stables he seized a hatchet, and with a bellow of rage rushed at the horse. I caught him by the coat and put on a fourteen-stone drag, while the horse dealer (who was as white as a cheese) ran off with his horse into the street. Cullingworth broke away from my grip, and cursing incoherently, his face slobbered with blood, and his hatchet waving over his head, he rushed out of the yard—the most diabolical-looking ruffian you can imagine. However, luckily for the dealer, he had got a good start, and Cullingworth was persuaded to come back and wash his face. We bound up his cut, and found him little the worse, except in his temper. But for me he would most certainly have paid seventy pounds for his insane outburst of rage against the animal.

I daresay you think it strange that I should write so much about this fellow and so little about anybody else; but the fact is, that I know nobody else, and that my whole circle is bounded by my patients, Cullingworth and his wife. They visit nobody, and nobody visits them. My living with them brings the same taboo from my brother doctors upon my head, although I have never done anything unprofessional myself. Who should I see in the street the other day but the McFarlanes, whom you will remember at Linlithgow? I was



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foolish enough to propose to Maimie McFarlane once, and she was sensible enough to refuse me. What I should have done had she accepted me I can't imagine; for that was three years ago, and I have more ties and less prospect of marriage now than then. Well, there's no use yearning for what you can't have, and there's no other man living to whom I would speak about the matter at all; but life is a deadly, lonely thing when a man has no one on his side but himself. Why is it that I am sitting here in the moonlight writing to you, except that I am craving for sympathy and fellowship? I get it from you, too—as much as one friend ever got from another—and yet there are some sides to my nature with which neither wife nor friend nor any one else can share. If you cut your own path, you must expect to find yourself alone upon it.

Heigh ho! it's nearly dawn, and I as wakeful as ever. It is chilly, and I have draped a blanket round me. I've heard that this is the favourite hour of the suicide, and I see that I've been tailing off in the direction of melancholy myself. Let me wind up on a lighter chord by quoting Cullingworth's latest article. I must tell you that he is still inflamed by the idea of his own paper, and his brain is in full eruption, sending out a perpetual stream of libellous paragraphs, doggerel poems, social skits, parodies, and articles. He brings them all to me, and my table is already piled with them. Here is his latest, brought up to my room after he had undressed. It was the outcome of some remarks I had made about the difficulty which our far-off descendants may have in determining what the meaning is of some of the commonest objects of our civilisation, and as a corollary how careful

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we should be before we become dogmatic about the old Romans or Egyptians.

“ At the third annual meeting of the New Guinea Archæological Society a paper was read upon recent researches on the supposed site of London, together with some observations upon hollow cylinders in use among the ancient Londoners. Several examples of these metallic cylinders or tubings were on exhibition in the hall, and were passed round for inspection among the audience. The learned lecturer prefaced his remarks by observing that on account of the enormous interval of time which separated them from the days when London was a flourishing city, it behoved them to be very guarded in any conclusions to which they might come as to the habits of the inhabitants. Recent research appeared to have satisfactorily established the fact that the date of the final fall of London was somewhat later than that of the erection of the Egyptian Pyramids. A large building had recently been unearthed near the dried-up bed of the river Thames ; and there could be no question from existing records that this was the seat of the law-making council among the ancient Britons—or Anglicans, as they were sometimes called. The lecturer proceeded to point out that the bed of the Thames had been tunnelled under by a monarch named Brunel, who is supposed by some authorities to have succeeded Alfred the Great. The open spaces of London, he went on to remark, must have been far from safe, as the bones of lions, tigers, and other extinct forms of carnivora had been discovered in the Regent's Park. Having briefly referred to the mysterious structures known as ‘pillar-boxes,’ which are scat-

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tered thickly over the city, and which are either religious in their origin, or else may be taken as marking the tombs of Anglican chiefs, the lecturer passed on to the cylindrical piping. This had been explained by the Patagonian school as being a universal system of lightning - conductors. He (the lecturer) could not assent to this theory. In a series of observations, extending over several months, he had discovered the important fact that these lines of tubing, if followed out, invariably led to large hollow metallic reservoirs which were connected with furnaces. No one who knew how addicted the ancient Britons were to the use of tobacco could doubt what this meant. Evidently large quantities of the herb were burned in the central chamber, and the aromatic and narcotic vapour was carried through the tubes to the house of every citizen, so that he might inhale it at will. Having illustrated his remarks by a series of diagrams, the lecturer concluded by saying that, although true science was invariably cautious and undogmatic, it was none the less an incontestable fact that so much light had been thrown upon old London, that every action of the citizens' daily life was known, from the taking of a tub in the morning, until after a draught of porter he painted himself blue before retiring to rest."

After all, I daresay this explanation of the London gas pipes is not more absurd than some of our shots about the Pyramids, or ideas of life among the Babylonians.

Well, good-bye, old chap; this is a stupid inconsequential letter, but life has been more quiet and less interesting just of late. I may have something a little more moving for my next.

## IX

I THE PARADE,  
BRADFIELD, 23rd April, 1882.

I HAVE some recollection, my dear Harold, that when I wrote you a rambling disconnected sort of letter about three weeks ago, I wound up by saying that I might have something more interesting to tell you next time. Well, so it has turned out! The whole game is up here, and I am off upon a fresh line of rails altogether. Cullingworth is to go one way, and I another; and yet I am glad to say that there has not been any quarrel between us. As usual, I have begun my letter at the end, but I'll work up to it more deliberately now, and let you know exactly how it came about.

And first of all, a thousand thanks for your two long letters, which lie before me as I write. There is little enough personal news in them, but I can quite understand that the quiet happy routine of your life reels off very smoothly from week to week. On the other hand, you give me plenty of proof of that inner life which is to me so very much more interesting. After all, we may very well agree to differ. You think some things are proved which I don't believe in. You think some things edifying which do not appear to me to be so. Well, I know that you are perfectly honest in your belief. I am sure you give me credit for being the same. The future will decide which of us is right. The survival of the truest is a constant law, I fancy, though it must be acknowledged that it is very slow in action.

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You make a mistake, however, in assuming that those who think as I do are such a miserable minority. The whole essence of our thought is independence and individual judgment; so that we don't get welded into single bodies as the churches do, and have no opportunity of testing our own strength. There are, no doubt, all shades of opinion among us; but if you merely include those who in their private hearts disbelieve the doctrines usually accepted, and think that sectarian churches tend to evil rather than good, I fancy that the figures would be rather surprising. When I read your letter, I made a list of all those men with whom I ever had intimate talk upon such matters. I got seventeen names, with four orthodox. Cullingworth tried and got twelve names, with one orthodox. From all sides, one hears that every church complains of the absence of men in the congregations. The women predominate three to one. Is it that women are more earnest than men? I think it is quite the other way. But the men are following their reason, and the women their emotion. It is the women only who keep orthodoxy alive.

No, you mustn't be too sure of that majority of yours. Taking the scientific, the medical, the professional classes, I question whether it exists at all. The clergy, busy in their own limited circles, and coming in contact only with those who agree with them, have not realised how largely the rising generation has outgrown them. And (with exceptions like yourself) it is not the most lax, but the *best* of the younger men, the larger-brained and the larger-hearted, who have shaken themselves most clear of the old theology. They cannot abide its want of

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charity, its limitations of God's favours, its claims for a special Providence, its dogmatism about what seems to be false, its conflict with what we know to be true. We *know* that man has ascended, not descended; so what is the value of a scheme of thought which depends upon the supposition of his fall? We *know* that the world was not made in six days, that the sun could never be stopped since it was never moving, and that no man ever lived three days in a fish; so what becomes of the inspiration of a book which contains such statements? "Truth, though it crush me!"

There, now, you see what comes of waving the red rag! Let me make a concession to appease you. I do believe that Christianity in its different forms has been the very best thing for the world during all this long barbarous epoch. Of course, it has been the best thing, else Providence would not have permitted it. The engineer knows best what tools to use in strengthening his own machine. But when you say that this is the best and *last* tool which will be used, you are laying down the law a little too much.

Now, first of all, I want to tell you about how the practice has been going on. The week after I wrote last showed a slight relapse. I only took two pounds. But on the next I took a sudden jump up to three pounds seven shillings, and this last week I took three pounds ten. So it was steadily creeping up; and I really thought that I saw my road clear in front of me, when the bolt suddenly fell from the blue. There were reasons, however, which prevented my being very disappointed when it did come down; and these I must make clear to you.

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I think that I mentioned, when I gave you a short sketch of my dear old mother, that she has a very high standard of family honour. She really tries to live up to the Percy-Plantagenet blend which is said to flow in our veins ; and it is only our empty pockets which prevent her from sailing through life, like the *grande dame* that she is, throwing *largesse* to right and left, with her head in the air and her soul in the clouds. I have often heard her say (and I am quite convinced that she meant it) that she would far rather see any one of us in our graves than know that we had committed a dishonourable action. Yes ; for all her softness and femininity, she could freeze iron-hard at the suspicion of baseness ; and I have seen the blood flush from her white cap to her lace collar when she has heard of an act of meanness.

Well, she had heard some details about the Cullingworths which displeased her when I first knew them. Then came the smash-up at Avonmouth, and my mother liked them less and less. She was averse to my joining them in Bradfield, and it was only by my sudden movement at the end that I escaped a regular prohibition. When I got there, the very first question she asked (when I told her of their prosperity) was whether they had paid their Avonmouth creditors. I was compelled to answer that they had not. In reply she wrote imploring me to come away, and saying that, poor as our family was, none of them had ever fallen so low as to enter into a business partnership with a man of unscrupulous character and doubtful antecedents. I answered that Cullingworth spoke sometimes of paying his creditors, that Mrs. Cullingworth was in favour of it also, and that it seemed to me to be

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unreasonable to expect that I should sacrifice a good opening on account of things with which I had no connection. I assured her that if Cullingworth did anything from then onward which seemed to me dishonourable, I would disassociate myself from him, and I mentioned that I had already refused to adopt some of his professional methods. Well, in reply to this, my mother wrote a pretty violent letter about what she thought of Cullingworth, which led to another from me defending him, and showing that there were some deep and noble traits in his character. That produced another still more outspoken letter from her; and so the correspondence went on, she attacking and I defending, until a serious breach seemed to be opening between us. I refrained from writing at last, not out of ill temper, but because I thought that if she were given time she would cool down, and take, perhaps, a more reasonable view of the situation. My father, from the short note which he sent me, seemed to think the whole business absolutely irregular, and to refuse to believe my accounts of Cullingworth's practice and receipts. This double opposition, from the very people whose interests had really been nearest my heart in the whole affair, caused me to be less disappointed than I should otherwise have been when it all came to an end. In fact, I was quite in the humour to finish it myself when Fate did it for me.

Now about the Cullingworths. Madame is as amiable as ever; and yet somehow, unless I am deceiving myself, she has changed somewhat of late in her feelings toward me. I have turned upon her suddenly more than once, and caught the skirt of a glance which was little less than malig-



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nant. In one or two small matters I have also detected a hardness in her which I had never observed before. Is it that I have intruded too much into their family life? Have I come between the husband and the wife? Goodness knows I have striven with all my little stock of tact to avoid doing so. And yet I have often felt that my position was a false one. Perhaps a young man attaches too much importance to a woman's glances and gestures. He wishes to assign a definite meaning to each, when they may be only the passing caprice of the moment. Ah, well, I have nothing to blame myself with; and in any case it will soon be all over now.

And then I have seen something of the same sort in Cullingworth; but he is so strange a being that I never attach much importance to his variations. He glares at me like an angry bull occasionally; and then when I ask him what is the matter, he growls out, "Oh nothing!" and turns on his heel. At other times he is so cordial and friendly that he almost overdoes it, and I find myself wondering whether he is not acting. It must seem ungracious to you that I should speak so of a man who has been my benefactor; and it seems so to me also, but still that is the impression which he leaves upon me sometimes. It's an absurd idea, too; for what possible object could his wife and he have in pretending to be amiable, if they did not really feel so? And yet you know the feeling that you get when a man smiles with his lips and not with his eyes.

One day we went to the Central Hotel billiard-room in the evening to play a match. Our form is just about the same, and we should have had an

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enjoyable game if it had not been for that queer temper of his. He had been in a sullen humour the whole day, pretending not to hear what I said to him, or else giving snappy answers, and looking like a thunder-cloud. I was determined not to have a row, so I took no notice at all of his continual provocations, which, instead of pacifying him, seemed to encourage him to become more offensive. At the end of the match, wanting two to win, I put down the white which was in the jaws of the pocket. He cried out that this was bad form. I contended that it was folly to refrain from doing it when one was only two off game, and, on his continuing to make remarks, I appealed to the marker, who took the same view as I did. This opposition only increased his anger, and he suddenly broke out into most violent language, abusing me in unmeasured terms. I said to him, "If you have anything to say to me, Cullingworth, come out into the street and say it there. It's a caddish thing to speak like that before the marker." He lifted his cue, and I thought he was going to strike me with it; but he flung it clattering on the floor, and chucked half a crown to the man. When we got out in the street, he began at once in as offensive a tone as ever.

"That's enough, Cullingworth," I said. "I've stood already rather more than I can carry."

We were in the bright light of a shop window at the moment. He looked at me, and looked a second time, uncertain what to do. At any moment I might have found myself in a desperate street row with a man who was my medical partner. I gave no provocation, but kept myself keenly on the alert. Suddenly, to my relief, he

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burst out laughing (such a roar as made the people stop on the other side of the road), and passing his arm through mine, he hurried me down the street.

"Devil of a temper you've got, Munro," said he. "By Crums, it's hardly safe to go out with you. I never know what you're going to do next. Eh, what? You mustn't be peppery with me, though; for I mean well toward you, as you'll see before you get finished with me."

I have told you this trivial little scene, Harold, to show the strange way in which Cullingworth springs quarrels upon me; suddenly, without the slightest possible provocation, taking a most offensive tone, and then when he sees he has goaded me to the edge of my endurance, turning the whole thing to chaff. This has occurred again and again recently; and, when coupled with the change in Mrs. Cullingworth's demeanour, makes one feel that something has happened to change one's relations. What that something may be, I give you my word that I have no more idea than you have. Between their coldness, however, and my unpleasant correspondence with my mother, I was often very sorry that I had not taken the South American liner.

Cullingworth is preparing for the issue of our new paper. He has carried the matter through with his usual energy, but he doesn't know enough about local affairs to be able to write about them, and it is a question whether he can interest the people here in anything else. At present we are prepared to run the paper single-handed; we are working seven hours a day at the practice; we are building a stable; and in our odd hours we are practising at our magnetic ship-protector, with

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

which Cullingworth is still well pleased, though he wants to get it more perfect before submitting it to the Admiralty.

His mind runs rather on naval architecture at present, and he has been devising an ingenious method of preventing wooden-sided vessels from being crippled by artillery fire. I did not think much of his magnetic attractor, because it seemed to me that even if it had all the success that he claimed for it, it would merely have the effect of substituting some other metal for steel in the manufacture of shells. This new project has, however, more to recommend it. This is the idea, as put in his own words ; and, as he has been speaking of little else for the last two days, I ought to remember them.

“If you’ve got your armour there, laddie, it will be pierced,” says he. “Put up forty feet thick of steel ; and I’ll build a gun that will knock it into tooth-powder. It would blow away and set the folk coughing after I had one shot at it. But you can’t pierce armour which only drops after the shot has passed through. What’s the good of it ? Why, it keeps out the water. That’s the main thing, after all. I call it the Cullingworth spring-shutter screen. Eh, what, Munro ? I wouldn’t take a quarter of a million for the idea. You see how it would work. Spring shutters are furled all along the top of the bulwarks where the hammocks used to be. They are in sections, three feet broad, we will say, and capable when let down of reaching the keel. Very well ! Enemy sends a shot through section A of the side. Section A shutter is lowered. Only a thin film, you see, but enough to form a temporary plug. Enemy’s ram knocks in

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sections B, C, D of the side. What do you do? Founder? Not a bit; you lower sections B, C, and D of Cullingworth's spring-shutter screen. Or you knock a hole on a rock. The same thing again. It's a ludicrous sight to see a big ship founder when so simple a precaution would absolutely save her. And it's equally good for ironclads also. A shot often stars their plates and admits water without breaking them. Down go your shutters, and all is well."

That's his idea, and he is busy on a model, made out of the steels of his wife's stays. It sounds plausible, but he has the knack of making anything plausible when he is allowed to slap his hands and bellow.

We are both writing novels, but I fear that the results don't bear out his theory that a man may do anything which he sets his will to. I thought mine was not so bad (I have done nine chapters), but Cullingworth says he has read it all before, and that it is much too conventional. We must rivet the attention of the public from the start, he says. Certainly, his own is calculated to do so, for it seems to me to be wild rubbish. The end of his first chapter is the only tolerable point that he has made. A fraudulent old baronet is running race-horses on the cross. His son, who is just coming of age, is an innocent youth. The news of the great race of the year has just been received.

"Sir Robert tottered into the room with dry lips and a ghastly face.

"My poor boy!' he cried. 'Prepare for the worst!'

"Our horse has lost!' cried the young heir, springing from his chair.

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"The old man threw himself in agony upon the rug. 'No, no!' he screamed. '*It has won!*'"

Most of it, however, is poor stuff, and we are each agreed that the other was never meant for a novelist.

So much for our domestic proceedings, and all these little details which you say you like to hear of. Now I must tell you of the great big change in my affairs, and how it came about.

I have told you about the strange, sulky behaviour of Cullingworth, which has been deepening from day to day. Well, it seemed to reach a climax this morning, and on our way to the rooms I could hardly get a word out of him. The place was fairly crowded with patients, but my own share was rather below the average. When I had finished I added a chapter to my novel, and waited until he and his wife were ready for the daily bag-carrying homeward.

It was half-past three before he had done. I heard him stamp out into the passage, and a moment later he came banging into my room. I saw in an instant that some sort of a crisis had come.

"Munro," he cried, "this practice is going to the devil!"

"Ah!" said I. "How's that?"

"It's going to little pieces, Munro. I've been taking figures, and I know what I am talking about. A month ago I was seeing six hundred a week. Then I dropped to five hundred and eighty; then to five-seventy-five; and now to five-sixty. What do you think of that?"

"To be honest, I don't think much of it," I answered. "The summer is coming on. You are losing all your coughs and colds and sore throats.

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Every practice must dwindle at this time of year."

"That's all very well," said he, pacing up and down the room, with his hands thrust into his pockets, and his great shaggy eyebrows knotted together. "You may put it down to that, but I think quite differently about it."

"What do you put it down to, then?"

"To you."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well," said he, "you must allow that it is a very queer coincidence—if it is a coincidence—that from the day when your plate was put up my practice has taken a turn for the worse."

"I should be very sorry to think it was cause and effect," I answered. "How do you think that my presence could have hurt you?"

"I'll tell you frankly, old chap," said he, putting on suddenly that sort of forced smile which always seems to me to have a touch of a sneer in it. "You see, many of my patients are simple country folk, half imbecile for the most part, but then the half-crown of an imbecile is as good as any other half-crown. They come to my door, and they see two names, and their silly jaws begin to drop, and they say to each other, 'There's two of 'em here. It's Dr. Cullingworth we want to see, but if we go in we'll be shown as likely as not to Dr. Munro.' So it ends in some cases in their not coming in at all. Then there are the women. Women don't care a toss whether you are a Solomon, or whether you are hot from an asylum. It's all personal with them. You fetch them, or you don't fetch them. I know how to work them, but they won't come if they think they are going to be

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turned over to anybody else. That's what I put the falling away down to."

"Well," said I, "that's easily set right." I marched out of the room and downstairs, with both Cullingworth and his wife behind me. Into the yard I went, and, picking up a big hammer, I started for the front door, with the pair still at my heels. I got the forked end of the hammer under my plate, and with a good wrench I brought the whole thing clattering on to the pavement.

"That won't interfere with you any more," said I.

"What do you intend to do now?" he asked.

"Oh, I shall find plenty to do. Don't you worry about that," I answered.

"Oh, but this is all rot," said he, picking up the plate. "Come along upstairs and let us see where we stand."

We filed off once more, he leading with the huge brass "Dr. Munro" under his arm; then the little woman, and then this rather perturbed and bemuddled young man. He and his wife sat on the deal table in the consulting room, like a hawk and a turtle-dove on the same perch, while I leaned against the mantelpiece with my hands in my pockets. Nothing could be more prosaic and informal; but I knew very well that I was at a crisis of my life. Before, it was only a choosing between two roads. Now my main track had run suddenly to nothing, and I must go back or find a byepath.

"It's this way, Cullingworth," said I. "I am very much obliged to you, and to you, Mrs. Cullingworth, for all your kindness and good wishes, but I did not come here to spoil your practice;



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and, after what you have told me, it is quite impossible for me to work with you any more."

"Well, my boy," said he, "I am inclined myself to think that we should do better apart; and that's Hetty's idea also, only she is too polite to say so."

"It is a time for plain speaking," I answered, "and we may as well thoroughly understand each other. If I have done your practice any harm, I assure you that I am heartily sorry, and I shall do all I can to repair it. I cannot say more."

"What are you going to do, then?" asked Cullingworth.

"I shall either go to sea or else start a practice on my own account."

"But you have no money."

"Neither had you when you started."

"Ah, that was different. Still, it may be that you are right. You'll find it a stiff pull at first."

"Oh, I am quite prepared for that."

"Well, you know, Munro, I feel that I am responsible to you to some extent, since I persuaded you not to take that ship the other day."

"It was a pity, but it can't be helped."

"We must do what we can to make up. Now, I tell you what I am prepared to do. I was talking about it with Hetty this morning, and she thought as I did. If we were to allow you one pound a week until you got your legs under you, it would encourage you to start for yourself, and you could pay it back as soon as you were able."

"It is very kind of you," said I. "If you would let the matter stand just now, I should like just to take a short walk by myself, and to think it all over."

So the Cullingworths did their bag-procession

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through the doctors' quarter alone to-day, and I walked to the park, where I sat down on one of the seats, lit a cigar and thought the whole matter over. I was down on my luck at first; but the balmy air and the smell of spring and the budding flowers soon set me right again. I began my last letter among the stars, and I am inclined to finish this one among the flowers, for they are rare companions when one's mind is troubled. Most things on this earth, from a woman's beauty to the taste of a nectarine, seem to be the various baits with which Nature lures her silly gudgeons. They shall eat, they shall propagate, and for the sake of pleasing themselves they shall hurry down the road which has been laid out for them. But there lurks no bribe in the smell and beauty of the flower. Its charm has no ulterior motive.

Well, I sat down there and brooded. In my heart I did not believe that Cullingworth had taken alarm at so trifling a decrease. That could not have been his real reason for driving me from the practice. He had found me in the way in his domestic life no doubt, and he had devised this excuse for getting rid of me. Whatever the reason was, it was sufficiently plain that all my hopes of building up a surgical practice, which should keep parallel with his medical one, were for ever at an end. On the whole, bearing in mind my mother's opposition, and the continual janglings which we had had during the last few weeks, I was not very sorry. On the contrary, a sudden curious little thrill of happiness took me somewhere about the back of the midriff, and, as a drift of rooks passed cawing over my head, I began cawing also in the overflow of my spirits.

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And then as I walked back I considered how far I could avail myself of this money from Cullingworth. It was not much, but it would be madness to start without it, for I had sent home the little which I had saved at Horton's. I had not more than six pounds in the whole world. I reflected that the money could make no difference to Cullingworth, with his large income, while it made a vast one to me. I should repay him in a year or two at the latest. Perhaps I might get on so well as to be able to dispense with it almost at once. There could be no doubt that it was the representations of Cullingworth as to my future prospects in Bradfield, which had made me refuse the excellent appointment in the *Decia*. I need not therefore have any scruples at accepting some temporary assistance from his hands. On my return, I told him that I had decided to do so, and thanked him at the same time for his generosity.

"That's all right," said he. "Hetty, my dear, get a bottle of fizz in, and we shall drink success to Munro's new venture."

It seemed only the other day that he had been drinking my entrance into partnership; and here we were, the same three, sipping good luck to my exit from it! I'm afraid our second ceremony was on both sides the heartier of the two.

"I must decide now where I am to start," I remarked. "What I want is some nice little town where all the people are rich and ill."

"I suppose you wouldn't care to settle here in Bradfield?" asked Cullingworth.

"Well, I cannot see much point in that. If I harmed you as a partner, I might do so more as a rival, If I succeeded, it might be at your expense."

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"Well," said he, "choose your town, and my offer still holds good."

We hunted out an atlas, and laid the map of England before us on the table. Cities and villages lay beneath me as thick as freckles, and yet there was nothing to lead me to choose one rather than another.

"I think it should be some place large enough to give you plenty of room for expansion," said he.

"Not too near London," added Mrs. Cullingworth.

"And, above all, a place where I know nobody," said I. "I can rough it by myself, but I can't keep up appearances before visitors."

"What do you say to Stockwell?" said Cullingworth, putting the amber of his pipe upon a town within thirty miles of Bradfield.

I had hardly heard of the place, but I raised my glass. "Well, here's to Stockwell!" I cried; "I shall go there to-morrow morning and prospect." We all drank the toast (as you will do at Lowell when you read this): and so it is arranged, and you may rely upon it that I shall give you a full and particular account of the result.

## X

1 CADOGAN TERRACE,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 21st May, 1882.

MY dear old chap, things have been happening, and I must tell you all about it. Sympathy is a strange thing; for though I never see you, the mere fact that you over there in New England are keenly interested in what I am doing and thinking, makes my own life in old England very much more interesting to me. The thought of you is like a good staff in my right hand.

The unexpected has happened so continually in my life that it has ceased to deserve the name. You remember that in my last I had received my dismissal, and was on the eve of starting for the little country town of Stockwell to see if there were any sign of a possible practice there. Well, in the morning, before I came down to breakfast, I was putting one or two things into a bag, when there came a timid knock at my door, and there was Mrs. Cullingworth in her dressing-jacket, with her hair down her back.

"Would you mind coming down and seeing James, Dr. Munro?" said she. "He has been very strange all night, and I am afraid that he is ill."

Down I went, and found Cullingworth looking rather red in the face, and a trifle wild about the eyes. He was sitting up in bed, with the neck of his nightgown open, and an acute angle of hairy chest exposed. He had a sheet of paper, a pencil,

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and a clinical thermometer upon the coverlet in front of him.

"Deuced interesting thing, Munro," said he. "Come and look at this temperature chart. I've been taking it every quarter of an hour since I couldn't sleep, and it's up and down till it looks like the mountains in the geography books. We'll have some drugs in—eh, what, Munro?—and by Crums, we'll revolutionise all their ideas about fevers. I'll write a pamphlet from personal experiment that will make all their books clean out of date, and they'll have to tear them up and wrap sandwiches in them."

He was talking in the rapid slurring way of a man who has trouble coming. I looked at his chart, and saw that he was over 102 degrees. His pulse rub-a-dubbed under my fingers, and his skin sent a glow into my hand.

"Any symptoms?" I asked, sitting down on the side of his bed.

"Tongue like a nutmeg-grater," said he, thrusting it out. "Frontal headache, renal pains, no appetite, and a mouse nibbling inside my left elbow. That's as far as we've got at present."

"I'll tell you what it is, Cullingworth," said I. "You have a touch of rheumatic fever, and you will have to lie by for a bit."

"Lie by be hanged!" he cried. "I've got a hundred people to see to-day. My boy, I must be down there if I have the rattle in my throat. I didn't build up a practice to have it ruined by a few ounces of lactic acid."

"James dear, you can easily build up another one," said his wife, in her cooing voice. "You must do what Dr. Munro tells you."

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"Well," said I, "you'll want looking after, and your practice will want looking after, and I am quite ready to do both. But I won't take the responsibility unless you give me your word that you will do what you are told."

"If I'm to have any doctoring it must come from you, laddie," he said; "for if I was to turn my toes up in the public square, there's not a man here who would do more than sign my certificate. By Crums, they might get the salts and oxalic acid mixed up if they came to treat me, for there's no love lost between us. But I want to go down to the practice all the same."

"It's out of the question. You know the sequel of this complaint. You'll have endocarditis, embolism, thrombosis, metastatic abscesses—you know the danger as well as I do."

He sank back into his bed laughing.

"I take my complaints one at a time, thank you," said he. "I wouldn't be so greedy as to have all those—eh, Munro, what? when many another poor devil hasn't got an ache to his back." The four posts of his bed quivered with his laughter. "Do what you like, laddie—but I say, mind, if anything should happen, no tomfoolery over my grave. If you put so much as a stone there, by Crums, Munro, I'll come back in the dead of the night and plant it on the pit of your stomach."

Nearly three weeks passed before he could set his foot to the ground again. He wasn't such a bad patient, after all; but he rather complicated my treatment by getting in all sorts of phials and powders, and trying experiments upon his own symptoms. It was impossible to keep him quiet, and our only means of retaining him in bed was to

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allow him all the work that he could do there. He wrote copiously, built up models of his patent screen, and banged off pistols at his magnetic target, which he had rigged up on the mantelpiece. Nature has given him a constitution of steel, however, and he shook off his malady more quickly and more thoroughly than the most docile of sufferers.

In the meantime, Mrs. Cullingworth and I ran the practice together. As a substitute for him I was a dreadful failure. They would not believe in me in the least. I felt that I was as flat as water after champagne. I could not address them from the stairs, nor push them about, nor prophesy to the anæmic women. I was much too solemn and demure after what they had been accustomed to. However, I held the thing together as best I could, and I don't think that he found the practice much the worse when he was able to take it over. I could not descend to what I thought was unprofessional, but I did my very best to keep the wheels turning.

Well, I know that I am a shocking bad storyteller, but I just try to get things as near the truth as I can manage it. If I only knew how to colour it up, I could make some of this better reading. I can get along when I am on one line, but it is when I have to bring in a second line of events that I understand what C. means when he says that I will never be able to keep myself in nibs by what I earn in literature.

The second line is this, that I had written to my mother on the same night that I wrote to you last, telling her that there need no longer be a shadow of a disagreement between us, because everything was arranged, and I was going to leave Culling-



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worth at once. Then within a couple of posts I had to write again and announce that my departure was indefinitely postponed, and that I was actually doing his whole practice. Well, the dear old lady was very angry. I don't suppose she quite understood how temporary the necessity was, and how impossible it would have been to leave Cullingworth in the lurch. She was silent for nearly three weeks, and then she wrote a very stinging letter (and she handles her adjectives most deftly when she likes). She went so far as to say that Cullingworth was a "bankrupt swindler," and that I had dragged the family honour in the dirt by my prolonged association with him. This letter came on the morning of the very last day that my patient was confined to the house. When I returned from work I found him sitting in his dressing-gown downstairs. His wife, who had driven home, was beside him. To my surprise, when I congratulated him on being fit for work again, his manner (which had been most genial during his illness) was as ungracious as before our last explanation. His wife, too, seemed to avoid my eye, and cocked her chin at me when she spoke.

"Yes, I'll take it over to-morrow," said he. "What do I owe you for looking after it?"

"Oh, it was all in the day's work," said I.

"Thank you, I had rather have strict business," he answered. "You know where you are then, but a favour is a thing with no end to it. What d'you put it at?"

"I never thought about it in that light."

"Well, think about it now. A locum would have cost me four guineas a week. Four fours sixteen. Make it twenty. Well, I promised to

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allow you a pound a week, and you were to pay it back. I'll put twenty pounds to your credit account, and you'll have it every week as sure as Saturday."

"Thank you," said I. "If you are so anxious to make a business matter of it, you can arrange it so." I could not make out, and cannot make out now, what had happened to freeze them up so; but I supposed that they had been talking it over, and came to the conclusion that I was settling down too much upon the old lines, and that they must remind me that I was under orders to quit. They might have done it with more tact.

To cut a long story short, on the very day that Cullingworth was able to resume his work I started off for Stockwell, taking with me only a bag, for it was merely a prospecting expedition, and I intended to return for my luggage if I saw reason for hope. Alas! there was not the faintest. The sight of the place would have damped the most sanguine man that ever lived. It is one of those picturesque little English towns with a history and little else. A Roman trench and a Norman keep are its principal products. But to me the most amazing thing about it was the cloud of doctors which had settled upon it. A double row of brass plates flanked the principal street. Where their patients came from I could not imagine, unless they practised upon each other. The host of the "Bull" where I had my modest lunch, explained the mystery to some extent by saying that, as there was pure country with hardly a hamlet for nearly twelve miles in every direction, it was in these scattered farm-houses that the Stockwell doctors found their patients. As I chatted with him a middle-aged, dusty-

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booted man trudged up the street. "There's Dr. Adam," said he. "He's only a new-comer, but they say that some o' these days he'll be starting his carriage." "What do you mean by a new-comer?" I asked. "Oh, he's scarcely been here ten years," said the landlord. "Thank you," said I. "Can you tell me when the next train leaves for Bradfield?" So back I came, rather heavy at heart, and having spent ten or twelve shillings which I could ill afford. My fruitless journey seemed a small thing, however, when I thought of the rising Stockwellite with his ten years and his dusty boots. I can trudge along a path, however rough, if it will but lead to something; but may kindly Fate keep me out of all *cul de sacs*!

The Cullingworths did not receive me cordially upon my return. There was a singular look upon both their faces which seemed to me to mean that they were disappointed at this hitch in getting rid of me. When I think of their absolute geniality a few days ago, and their markedly reserved manner now, I can make no sense out of it. I asked Cullingworth point blank what it meant, but he only turned it off with a forced laugh, and some nonsense about my thin skin. I think that I am the last man in the world to take offence where none is meant; but at any rate I determined to end the matter by leaving Bradfield at once. It had struck me, during my journey back from Stockwell, that Birchespool would be a good place; so on the very next day I started off, taking my luggage with me, and bidding a final good-bye to Cullingworth and his wife.

"You rely upon me, laddie," said C. with something of his old geniality, as we shook hands on

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parting. "You get a good house in a central position, put up your plate and hold on by your toenails. Charge little or nothing until you get a connection, and none of your professional haw-dammy or you are a broken man. I'll see that you don't stop steaming for want of coal."

So with that comforting assurance I left them on the platform of the Bradfield station. The words seem kind, do they not ? and yet taking this money jars every nerve in my body. When I find that I can live on bread and water without it, I will have no more of it. But to do without it now would be for the man who cannot swim to throw off his life-belt.

I had plenty of time on my way to Birchespool to reflect upon my prospects and present situation. My baggage consisted of a large brass plate, a small leather trunk, and a hat-box. The plate with my name engraved upon it was balanced upon the rack above my head. In my box were a stethoscope, several medical books, a second pair of boots, two suits of clothes, my linen and my toilet things. With this, and the five pounds eighteen shillings which remain in my purse, I was sallying out to clear standing-room, and win the right to live from my fellow-men. But at least there was some chance of permanency about this ; and if there was the promise of poverty and hardship, there was also that of freedom. I should have no Lady Saltire to toss up her chin because I had my own view of things, no Cullingworth to fly out at me about nothing. I would be my own—my very own. I capered up and down the carriage at the thought. After all, I had everything to gain and nothing in the whole wide world to lose. And I had youth

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and strength and energy, and the whole science of medicine packed in between my two ears. I felt as exultant as though I were going to take over some practice which lay ready for me.

It was about four in the afternoon when I reached Birchespool, which is fifty-three miles by rail from Bradfield. It may be merely a name to you, and, indeed, until I set foot in it I knew nothing of it myself; but I can tell you now that it has a population of a hundred and thirty thousand souls (about the same as Bradfield), that it is mildly manufacturing, that it is within an hour's journey of the sea, that it has an aristocratic western suburb with a mineral well, and that the country round is exceedingly beautiful. It is small enough to have a character of its own, and large enough for solitude, which is always the great charm of a city, after the offensive publicity of the country.

When I turned out with my brass plate, my trunk, and my hat-box upon the Birchespool platform, I sat down and wondered what my first move should be. Every penny was going to be of the most vital importance to me, and I must plan things within the compass of that tiny purse. As I sat pondering, there came a sight of interest, for I heard a burst of cheering with the blare of a band upon the other side of the station, and then the pioneers and leading files of a regiment came swinging on to the platform. They wore white sun-hats, and were leaving for Malta, in anticipation of war in Egypt. They were young soldiers—English by the white facings—with a colonel whose moustache reached his shoulders, and a number of fresh-faced long-legged subalterns. I chiefly remember one of the colour-sergeants, a

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man of immense size and ferocious face, who leaned upon his Martini, with two little white kittens peeping over either shoulder from the flaps of his knapsack. I was so moved at the sight of these youngsters going out to do their best for the dear old country, that I sprang up on my box, took off my hat, and gave them three cheers. At first the folk on my side looked at me in their bovine fashion—like a row of cows over a wall. At the second a good many joined, and at the third my own voice was entirely lost. So I turned to go my way, and the soldier laddies to go theirs; and I wondered which of us had the stiffest and longest fight before us.

I left my baggage at the office, and jumped into a tramcar which was passing the station, with the intention of looking for lodgings, as I judged that they would be cheaper than an hotel. The conductor interested himself in my wants in that personal way which makes me think that the poorer classes in England are one of the kindest races on earth. Policemen, postmen, railway guards, busmen, what good helpful fellows they all are! This one reckoned the whole thing out, how this street was central but dear, and the other was out-of-the-way but cheap, and finally dropped me at a medium shabby-genteel kind of thoroughfare called Cadogan Terrace, with instructions that I was to go down there and see how I liked it.

I could not complain of a limited selection, for a “to let” or “apartments” was peeping out of every second window. I went into the first attractive house that I saw, and interviewed the rather obtuse and grasping old lady who owned it. A sitting bedroom was to be had for thirteen shillings a

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week. As I had never hired rooms before, I had no idea whether this was cheap or dear; but I conclude it was the latter, since on my raising my eyebrows as an experiment she instantly came down to ten shillings and sixpence. I tried another look and an exclamation of astonishment; but as she stood firm, I gathered that I had touched the bottom.

"Your rooms are quite clean?" I asked, for there was a wooden panelling which suggested possibilities.

"Quite clean, sir."

"No vermin?"

"The officers of the garrison come sometimes."

This took some thinking out. It had an ugly sound, but I gathered that she meant that there could be no question about the cleanliness since these gentlemen were satisfied. So the bargain was struck, and I ordered tea to be ready in an hour, while I went back to the station to fetch up my luggage. A porter brought it up for eightpence (saving fourpence on a cab, my boy!), and so I found myself in the heart of Birchespool with a base of operations secured. I looked out of the little window of my lodgings at the reeking pots and grey sloping roofs, with a spire or two spurt-ing up among them, and I shook my teaspoon defiantly at them. "You've got to conquer me," said I, "or else I'm man enough to conquer you."

Now, you would hardly expect that a fellow would have an adventure on his very first night in a strange town; but I had—a trivial one, it is true, but fairly exciting while it lasted. Certainly it reads more like what might happen to a man in a book, but you may take it from me that it worked out just as I set it down here.

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

When I had finished my tea, I wrote a few letters—one to Cullingworth, and one to Horton. Then, as it was a lovely evening, I determined to stroll out and see what sort of a place it was upon which Fate had washed me up. "Best begin as you mean to go on," thought I; so I donned my frock-coat, put on my carefully-brushed top-hat, and sallied forth with my very respectable metal-headed walking stick in my hand.

I walked down to the Park, which is the chief centre of the place, and I found that I liked everything I saw of it. It was a lovely evening, and the air was fresh and sweet. I sat down and listened to the band for an hour, watching all the family parties, and feeling particularly lonely. Music nearly always puts me into the minor key; so there came a time when I could stand it no longer, and I set off to find my way back to my lodgings. On the whole, I felt that Birchespool was a place in which a man might very well spend a happy life.

At one end of Cadogan Terrace (where I am lodging) there is a wide open space where several streets meet. In the centre of this stands a large lamp in the middle of a broad stone pedestal, a foot or so high, and ten or twelve across. Well, as I strolled along I saw there was something going on round this lamp-post. A crowd of people had gathered, with a swirl in the centre. I was, of course, absolutely determined not to get mixed up in any row; but I could not help pushing my way through the crowd to see what was the matter.

It wasn't a pretty sight. A woman, pinched and bedraggled, with a baby on her arm, was being knocked about by a burly brute of a fellow whom



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I judged to be her husband from the way in which he cherished her. He was one of those red-faced, dark-eyed men who can look peculiarly malignant when they choose. It was clear that he was half mad with drink, and that she had been trying to lure him away from some den. I was just in time to see him take a flying kick at her, amid cries of "Shame!" from the crowd, and then lurch forward again, with the evident intention of having another, the mob still expostulating vaguely.

If it had been old student days, Harold, I should have sailed straight in, as you or any other fellow would have done. My flesh crept with my loathing for the brute. But I had also to think of what I was and where I was, and what I had come there to do. However, there are some things which a man cannot stand, so I took a couple of steps forward, put my hand on the fellow's shoulder, and said in as conciliatory and genial a voice as I could muster: "Come, come, my lad! Pull yourself together."

Instead of "pulling himself together," he very nearly knocked me asunder. I was all abroad for an instant. He had turned on me like a flash, and had struck me on the throat just under the chin, my head being a little back at the moment. It made me swallow once or twice, I can tell you. Sudden as the blow was, I had countered, in the automatic sort of way that a man who knows anything of boxing does. It was only from the elbow, with no body behind it, but it served to stave him off for the moment, while I was making inquiries about my windpipe. Then in he came with a rush; and the crowd swarming round with shrieks of delight, we were pushed, almost locked in each

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other's arms, on to that big pedestal of which I have spoken. "Go it, little 'un!" "Give him beans!" yelled the mob, who had lost all sight of the origin of the fray, and could only see that my opponent was two inches the shorter man. So there, my dear Harold, was I, within a few hours of my entrance into this town, with my top-hat down to my ears, my highly professional frock-coat, and my kid gloves, fighting some low bruiser on a pedestal in one of the most public places, in the heart of a yelling and hostile mob! I ask you whether that was cruel luck or not?

Cullingworth told me before I started that Birchespool was a lively place. For the next few minutes it struck me as the liveliest I had ever seen. The fellow was a round hand hitter, but so strong that he needed watching. A round blow is, as you know, more dangerous than a straight one if it gets home; for the angle of the jaw, the ear, and the temple, are the three weakest points which you present. However, I took particular care that my man did not get home; but, on the other hand, I fear that I did not do him much harm either. He bored in with his head down; and I, like a fool, broke my knuckles over the top of his impenetrable skull. Of course, theoretically I should either have stepped back and tried an undercut, or else taken him into chancery; but I must confess to feeling flurried and rattled from the blow I had had, as well as from the suddenness of the whole affair. However, I was cooling down, and I daresay should in time have done something rational, when the affray came to a sudden and unexpected end.

This was from the impatience and excitement of the crowd. The folk behind, wishing to see all

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that was going on, pushed against those in front, until half a dozen of the foremost (with, I think, a woman among them) were flung right up against us. One of these, a rough, sailor-like fellow in a jersey, got wedged between us; and my antagonist, in his blind rage, got one of his swinging blows home upon this new-comer's ear. "What, you ——!" yelled the sailor; and in an instant he had taken over the whole contract, and was at it hammer and tongs with my beauty. I grabbed my stick, which had fallen among the crowd, and backed my way out, rather dishevelled, but very glad to get off so cheaply. From the shouting which I could hear some time after I reached the door of my lodgings, I gathered that a good battle was still raging.

You see, it was the merest piece of luck in the world that my first appearance in Birchespool was not in the dock of the police-court. I should have had no one to answer for me, if I had been arrested, and should have been put quite on a level with my adversary. I daresay you think I made a great fool of myself, but I should like to know how I could have acted otherwise.

The only thing that I feel now is my loneliness. What a lucky fellow you are with your wife and your child. After all, I see more and more clearly that both men and women are incomplete, fragmentary, mutilated creatures, as long as they are single. Do what they may to persuade themselves that their state is the happiest, they are still full of vague unrests, of dim, ill-defined dissatisfactions, of a tendency to narrow ways and selfish thoughts. Alone each is a half-made being, with every instinct and feeling yearning for its missing

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moiety. Together they form a complete and symmetrical whole, the mind of each strongest where that of the other needs reinforcing. I often think that if our souls survive death (and I believe they do, though I base my belief on different grounds from yours), every male soul will have a female one attached to or combined with it, to round it off and give it symmetry. So thought the old Mormon, you remember, who used it as an argument for his creed. "You cannot take your railway stocks into the next world with you," he said. "But with all our wives and children we should make a good start in the world to come."

I daresay you are smiling at me, as you read this, from the vantage ground of your two years of matrimony. It will be long before I shall be able to put my views into practice.

Well, good-bye, my dear old chap! As I said at the beginning of my letter, the very thought of you is good for me, and never more so than at this moment, when I am alone in a strange city, with very dubious prospects, and an uncertain future. We differ as widely as the poles, you and I, and have done ever since I have known you. You are true to your faith, I to my reason; but our friendship shows that the real essentials of a man, and his affinity for others, depends upon quite other things than views on abstract questions. Anyway, I can say with all my heart that I wish I saw you with that old corncob of yours between your teeth, sitting in that rickety American-leather arm-chair, with the villainous lodging-house antimacassar over the back of it. It is good of you to tell me how interested you are in my rather commonplace adventures; though if I had not *known* that you

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were so, you may be sure that I should never have ventured to inflict any of them upon you. My future is now all involved in obscurity, but it is obvious that the first thing I must do is to find a fitting house, and my second to cajole the landlord into letting me enter into possession of it without any prepayment. To that I will turn myself to-morrow morning, and you shall know the result. Whom should I hear from the other day but Archie McLagan? Of course it was a begging letter. You can judge how far I am in a state to lose money ; but in a hot fit I sent him ten shillings, which now, in my cold, I bitterly regret. Every good wish to you and yours, including your town, your State, and your great country.

## XI

1 OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 29th May, 1882.

BIRCHESPOOL is really a delightful place, dear Harold; and I ought to know something about it, seeing that I have padded a good hundred miles through its streets during the last seven days. Its mineral springs used to be quite the mode a century or more ago; and it retains many traces of its aristocratic past, carrying it with a certain grace, too, as an *émigré* countess might wear the faded dress which had once rustled in Versailles. I forget the new roaring suburbs with their outgoing manufactures and their incoming wealth, and I live in the queer health-giving old city of the past. The wave of fashion has long passed over it, but a deposit of dreary respectability has been left behind. In the High Street you can see the long iron extinguishers upon the railings where the link-boys used to put out their torches, instead of stamping upon them or slapping them on the pavement, as was the custom in less high-toned quarters. There are the very high curb-stones too, so that Lady Teazle or Mrs. Sneerwell could step out of coach or sedan chair without soiling her dainty satin shoes. It brings home to me what an unstable chemical compound man is. Here are the stage accessories as good as ever, while the players have all split up into hydrogen and oxygen and nitrogen and carbon, with traces of iron and silica and phosphorus. A tray full of chemicals and three

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buckets of water,—there is the raw material of my lady in the sedan chair! It's a curious double picture, if one could but conjure it up. On the one side the high-born bucks, the mincing ladies, the scheming courtiers, pushing and planning, and striving every one of them to attain his own petty object. Then for a jump of a hundred years. What is this in the corner of the old vault? Margarine and chlosterine, carbonates, sulphates, and ptomaines! We turn from it in loathing, and as we go we carry with us that from which we fly.

But, mind you, Harold, I have a very high respect for the human body, and I hold that it has been unduly snubbed and maligned by divines and theologians: "our gross frames" and "our miserable mortal clay" are phrases which to my mind partake more of blasphemy than of piety. It is no compliment to the Creator to depreciate His handiwork. Whatever theory or belief we may hold about the soul, there can, I suppose, be no doubt that the body is immortal. Matter may be transformed (in which case it may be re-transformed), but it can never be destroyed. If a comet were to strike this globule of ours, and to knock it into a billion fragments, which were splashed all over the solar system—if its fiery breath were to lick up the earth's surface until it was peeled like an orange, still at the end of a hundred millions of years every tiniest particle of our bodies would exist in other forms and combinations it is true; but still those very atoms which now form the forefinger which traces these words. So the child with the same wooden bricks will build a wall, then strew them on the table; then a tower, then strew once more, and so ever with the same bricks.

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But then our individuality? I often wonder whether something of that will cling to our atoms—whether the dust of Johnnie Munro will ever have something of him about it, and be separable from that of Harold Swanborough. I think it is possible that we *do* impress ourselves upon the units of our own structure. There are facts which tend to show that every tiny organic cell of which a man is composed, contains in its microcosm a complete miniature of the individual of which it forms a part. The ovum itself from which we are all produced is, as you know, too small to be transfixed upon the point of a fine needle; and yet within that narrow globe lies the potentiality, not only for reproducing the features of two individuals, but even their smallest tricks of habit and of thought. Well, if a single cell contains so much, perhaps a single molecule and atom has more than we think.

Have you ever had any personal experience of dermoid cysts? We had one in Cullingworth's practice just before his illness, and we were both much excited about it. They seem to me to be one of those wee little chinks through which one may see deep into Nature's workings. In this case the fellow, who was a clerk in the post-office, came to us with a swelling over his eyebrow. We opened it under the impression that it was an abscess, and found inside some hair and a rudimentary jaw with teeth in it. You know that such cases are common enough in surgery, and that no pathological museum is without an example.

But what are we to understand by it? So startling a phenomenon must have a deep meaning. That can only be, I think, that *every* cell in the body has the power latent in it by which it may re-



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produce the whole individual—and that occasionally under some special circumstances—some obscure nervous or vascular excitement—one of these microscopic units of structure actually does make a clumsy attempt in that direction.

But, my goodness, where have I got to? All this comes from the Birchespool lamp-posts and curb-stones. And I sat down to write such a practical letter too! However, I give you leave to be as dogmatic and didactic as you like in return. Cullingworth says my head is like a bursting capsule, with all the seeds getting loose. Poor seed, too, I fear, but some of it may lodge somewhere—or not, as Fate pleases.

I wrote to you last on the night that I reached here. Next morning I set to work upon my task. You would be surprised (at least I was) to see how practical and methodical I can be. First of all I walked down to the post-office and I bought a large shilling map of the town. Then back I came and pinned this out upon the lodging-house table. This done, I set to work to study it, and to arrange a series of walks by which I should pass through every street of the place. You have no idea what that means until you try to do it. I used to have breakfast, get out about ten, walk till one, have a cheap luncheon (I can do well on threepence), walk till four, get back and note results. On my map I put a cross for every empty house and a circle for every doctor. So at the end of that time I had a complete chart of the whole place, and could see at a glance where there was a possible opening, and what opposition there was at each point.

In the meantime I had enlisted a most unexpected ally. On the second evening a card was

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solemnly brought up by the landlady's daughter from the lodger who occupied the room below. On it was inscribed "Captain Whitehall"; and then underneath, in brackets, "Armed Transport." On the back of the card was written, "Captain Whitehall (Armed Transport) presents his compliments to Dr. Munro, and would be glad of his company to supper at 8.30." To this I answered, "Dr. Munro presents his compliments to Captain Whitehall (Armed Transport), and will be most happy to accept his kind invitation." What "Armed Transport" might mean I had not an idea, but I thought it well to include it, as he seemed so particular about it himself.

On descending I found a curious-looking figure in a grey dressing-gown with a purple cord. He was an elderly man—his hair not quite white yet, but well past mouse colour. His beard and moustache, however, were of a yellowish brown, and his face all puckered and shot with wrinkles, spare and yet puffy, with hanging bags under his singular light blue eyes.

"By God, Dr. Munro, sir," said he, as he shook my hand. "I take it as very kind of you that you should accept an informal invitation. I do, sir, by God!"

This sentence was, as it proved, a very typical one, for he nearly always began and ended each with an oath, while the centre was, as a rule, remarkable for a certain suave courtesy. So regular was his formula that I may omit it and you suppose it, every time that he opened his mouth. A dash here and there will remind you.

"It's been my practice, Dr. Munro, sir, to make friends with my neighbours through life; and some

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strange neighbours I have had. By ——, sir, humble as you see me, I have sat with a general on my right, and an admiral on my left, and my toes up against a British ambassador. That was when I commanded the armed transport *Hegira* in the Black Sea in '55. Burst up in the great gale in Balaclava Bay, sir, and not as much left as you could pick your teeth with."

There was a strong smell of whisky in the room, and an uncorked bottle upon the mantelpiece. The captain himself spoke with a curious stutter, which I put down at first to a natural defect; but his lurch as he turned back to his arm-chair showed me that he had had as much as he could carry.

"Not much to offer you, Dr. Munro, sir. The hind leg of a —— duck, and a sailor's welcome. Not Royal Navy, sir, though I have a —— sight better manners than many that are. No, sir, I fly no false colours, and put no R.N. after my name; but I'm the Queen's servant, by ——! No mercantile marine about me! Have a wet, sir! It's the right stuff and I have drunk enough to know the difference."

As the supper progressed I warmed with the liquor and the food, and I told my new acquaintance all about my plans and intentions. I didn't realise how lonely I had been until I found the pleasure of talking. He listened to it all with much sympathy, and to my horror tossed off a whole tumblerful of neat whisky to my success. So enthusiastic was he that it was all I could do to prevent him from draining a second one.

"You'll do it, Dr. Munro, sir!" he cried. "I know a man when I see one, and you'll do it. There's my hand, sir! I'm with you! You needn't

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be ashamed to grasp it, for by ——, though I say it myself, it's been open to the poor and shut to a bully ever since I could suck milk. Yes, sir, you'll make a good shipmate, and I'm —— glad to have you on my poop."

For the remainder of the evening his fixed delusion was that I had come to serve under him; and he read me long rambling lectures about ship's discipline, still always addressing me as "Dr. Munro, sir." At last, however, his conversation became unbearable—a foul young man is odious, but a foul old one is surely the most sickening thing on earth. One feels that the white upon the hair, like that upon the mountain, should signify a height attained. I rose and bade him good-night, with a last impression of him leaning back in his dressing-gown, a sodden cigar-end in the corner of his mouth, his beard all slopped with whisky, and his half-glazed eyes looking sideways after me with the leer of a satyr. I had to go into the street and walk up and down for half an hour before I felt clean enough to go to bed.

I wanted to see no more of my neighbour, but in he came as I was sitting at breakfast, smelling like a bar-parlour, with stale whisky oozing at every pore.

"Good-morning, Dr. Munro, sir," said he, holding out a twitching hand. "I compliment you, sir! You look fresh, —— fresh, and me with a head like a toy-shop. We had a pleasant, quiet evening, and I took nothing to hurt, but it is the —— relaxing air of this place that settles me. I can't bear up against it. Last year it gave me the horrors, and I expect it will again. You're off house-hunting, I suppose?"

"I start immediately after breakfast."

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"I take a cursed interest in the whole thing. You may think it a —— impertinence, but that's the way I'm made. As long as I can steam I'll throw a rope to whoever wants a tow. I'll tell you what I'll do, Dr. Munro, sir. I'll stand on one tack if you'll stand on the other, and I'll let you know if I come across anything that will do."

There seemed to be no alternative between taking him with me, or letting him go alone; so I could only thank him and let him have *carte blanche*. Every night he would turn up, half-drunk as a rule, having, I believe, walked his ten or fifteen miles as conscientiously as I had done. He came with the most grotesque suggestions. Once he had actually entered into negotiations with the owner of a huge shop, a place that had been a draper's, with a counter about sixty feet long. His reason was that he knew an innkeeper who had done very well a little further down on the other side. Poor old "armed transport" worked so hard that I could not help being touched and grateful; yet I longed from my heart that he would stop, for he was a most unsavoury agent, and I never knew what extraordinary step he might take in my name. He introduced me to two other men, one of them a singular-looking fellow named Turpey, who was struggling along upon a wound-pension, having, when only a senior midshipman, lost the sight of one eye and the use of one arm through the injuries he received at some unpronounceable Pah in the Maori war. The other was a sad-faced poetical-looking man, of good birth as I understood, who had been disowned by his family on the occasion of his eloping with the cook. His name was Carr, and his chief peculiar-

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ity, that he was so regular in his irregularities that he could always tell the time of day by the state of befuddlement that he was in. He would cock his head, think over his own symptoms, and then give you the hour fairly correctly. An unusual drink would disarrange him, however; and if you forced the pace in the morning, he would undress and go to bed about tea-time, with a full conviction that all the clocks had gone mad. These two strange waifs were among the craft to whom old Whitehall had in his own words "thrown a rope"; and long after I had gone to bed I could hear the clink of their glasses, and the tapping of their pipes against the fender in the room below.

Well, when I had finished my empty-house-and-doctor chart, I found that there was one villa to let, which undoubtedly was far the most suitable for my purpose. In the first place it was fairly cheap—forty pounds, or fifty with taxes. The front looked well. It had no garden. It stood with the well-to-do quarter upon the one side, and the poorer upon the other. Finally, it was almost at the intersection of four roads, one of which was a main artery of the town. Altogether, if I had ordered a house for my purpose I could hardly have got anything better, and I was thrilled with apprehension lest some one should get before me to the agent. I hurried round and burst into the office with a precipitancy which rather startled the demure clerk inside.

His replies, however, were reassuring. The house was still to let. It was not quite the quarter yet, but I could enter into possession. I must sign an agreement to take it for one year, and it was usual to pay a quarter's rent in advance.

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I don't know whether I turned colour a little.

"In advance!" I said, as carelessly as I could.

"It is usual."

"Or references?"

"Well, that depends, of course, upon the references."

"Not that it matters much," said I. (Heaven forgive me!) "Still, if it is the same to the firm, I may as well pay by the quarter, as I shall do afterward."

"What names did you propose to give?" he asked.

My heart gave a bound, for I knew that all was right. My uncle, as you know, won his knighthood in the Artillery, and though I have seen nothing of him, I knew that he was the man to pull me out of this tight corner.

"There's my uncle, Sir Alexander Munro, Lismore House, Dublin," said I. "He would be happy to answer any inquiry, and so would my friend Dr. Cullingworth of Bradfield."

I brought him down with both barrels. I could see it by his eyes and the curve of his back.

"I have no doubt that that will be quite satisfactory," said he. "Perhaps you would kindly sign the agreement."

I did so, and drew my hind foot across the Rubicon. The die was cast. Come what might, 1 Oakley Villas was on my hand for a twelve-month.

"Would you like the key now?"

I nearly snatched it out of his hands. Then away I ran to take possession of my property. Never shall I forget my feelings, my dear Harold, when the key clicked in the lock, and the door flew

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open. It was my own house—all my very own! I shut the door again, the noise of the street died down, and I had, in that empty, dust-strewn hall, such a sense of soothing privacy as had never come to me before. In all my life it was the first time that I had ever stood upon boards which were not paid for by another.

Then I proceeded to go from room to room with a delicious sense of exploration. There were two upon the ground floor, sixteen feet square each, and I saw with satisfaction that the wall papers were in fair condition. The front one would make a consulting room, the other a waiting room, though I did not care to reflect who was most likely to do the waiting. I was in the highest spirits, and did a step dance in each room as an official inauguration.

Then down a winding wooden stair to the basement, where were kitchen and scullery, dimly lit, and asphalt-floored. As I entered the latter I stood staring. In every corner piles of human jaws were grinning at me. The place was a Golgotha! In that half light the effect was sepulchral. But as I approached and picked up one of them the mystery vanished. They were of plaster-of-Paris, and were the leavings evidently of the dentist, who had been the last tenant. A more welcome sight was a huge wooden dresser with drawers and a fine cupboard in the corner. It only wanted a table and a chair to be a furnished room.

Then I ascended again and went up the first flight of stairs. There were two other good sized apartments there. One should be my bedroom, and the other a spare room. And then another flight with two more. One for the servant, when



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I had one, and the other for a guest. From the windows I had a view of the undulating grey back of the city, with the bristle of green tree tops. It was a windy day, and the clouds were drifting swiftly across the heavens, with glimpses of blue between. I don't know how it was, but as I stood looking through the grimy panes in the empty rooms a sudden sense of my own individuality and of my responsibility to some higher power came upon me, with a vividness which was overpowering. Here was a new chapter of my life about to be opened. What was to be the end of it? I had strength, I had gifts. What was I going to do with them? All the world, the street, the cabs, the houses, seemed to fall away, and the mite of a figure and the unspeakable Guide of the Universe were for an instant face to face. I was on my knees—hurled down all against my own will, as it were. And even then I could find no words to say. Only vague yearnings and emotions and a heartfelt wish to put my shoulder to the great wheel of good. What could I say? Every prayer seemed based on the idea that God was a magnified man—that He needed asking and praising and thanking. Should the cog of the wheel creak praise to the Engineer? Let it rather cog harder, and creak less. Yet I did, I confess, try to put the agitation of my soul into words. I meant it for a prayer; but when I considered afterward the "supposing thats" and "in case ofs" with which it was sprinkled, it must have been more like a legal document. And yet I felt soothed and happier as I went downstairs again.

I tell you this, Harold, because if I put reason above emotion I would not have you think that I

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am not open to attacks of the latter also. I feel that what I say about religion is too cold and academic. I feel that there should be something warmer and sweeter and more comforting. But if you ask me to buy this at the price of making myself believe a thing to be true, which all that is nearest the divine in me cries out against, then you are selling your opiates too high. I'm a volunteer for "God's own forlorn hope," and I'll clamber up the breach as long as I think I can see the flag of truth waving in front of me.

Well, my next two cares were to get drugs and furniture. The former I was sure that I could obtain on long credit; while the latter I was absolutely determined not to get into debt over. I wrote to the Apothecaries' Company, giving the names of Cullingworth and of my father, and ordering twelve pounds' worth of tinctures, infusions, pills, powders, ointments, and bottles. Cullingworth must, I should think, have been one of their very largest customers, so I knew very well that my order would meet with prompt attention.

There remained the more serious matter of the furniture. I calculated that when my lodgings were paid for I might, without quite emptying my purse, expend four pounds upon furniture—not a large allowance for a good sized villa. That would leave me a few shillings to go on with, and before they were exhausted Cullingworth's pound would come in. Those pounds, however, would be needed for the rent, so I could hardly reckon upon them at all, as far as my immediate wants went. I found in the columns of the *Birchesspool Post* that there was to be a sale of furniture that evening, and I went down to the auctioneer's rooms, accom-

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panied, much against my will, by Captain Whitehall, who was very drunk and affectionate.

"By God, Dr. Munro, sir, I'm the man that's going to stick to you. I'm only an old sailorman, sir, with perhaps more liquor than sense; but I'm the Queen's servant, and touch my pension every quarter day. I don't claim to be R.N., but I'm not merchant service either. Here I am, rotting in lodgings, but by —, Dr. Munro, sir, I carried seven thousand stinking Turks from Varna to Balacava Bay. I'm with you, Dr. Munro, and we put this thing through together."

We came to the auction rooms and we stood on the fringe of the crowd waiting for our chance. Presently up went a very neat little table. I gave a nod and got it for nine shillings. Then three rather striking-looking chairs, black wood and cane bottoms. Four shillings each I gave for those. Then a metal umbrella stand, four and sixpence. That was a mere luxury, but I was warming to the work. A job lot of curtains all tied together in a bundle went up. Somebody bid five shillings. The auctioneer's eye came round to me, and I nodded. Mine again, for five and sixpence. Then I bought a square of red drugget for half a crown, a small iron bed for nine shillings, three water-colour paintings, "Spring," "The Banjo Player," and "Windsor Castle," for five shillings; a tiny fender, half a crown; a toilet set, five shillings; another very small square-topped table, three and sixpence. Whenever I bid for anything, Whitehall thrust his black-thorn up into the air, and presently I found him doing so on my behalf when I had no intention of buying. I narrowly escaped having to give fourteen and sixpence for a stuffed macaw in a glass case.

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"It would do to hang in your hall, Dr. Munro, sir," said he when I remonstrated with him.

"I should have to hang myself in my hall soon if I spent my money like that," said I. "I've got as much as I can afford now, and I must stop."

When the auction was over, I paid my bill and had my goods hoisted on to a trolly, the porter undertaking to deliver them for two shillings. I found that I had over-estimated the cost of furnishing, for the total expense was little more than three pounds. We walked round to Oakley Villas, and I proudly deposited all my goods in the hall. And here came another extraordinary example of the kindness of the poorer classes. The porter when I had paid him went out to his trolly and returned with a huge mat of oakum, as ugly a thing as I have ever set eyes upon. This he laid down inside my door, and then without a word, brushing aside every remonstrance or attempt at thanks, he vanished away with his trolly into the night.

Next morning I came round to my house—*my* house, my boy!—for good and all, after paying off my landlady. Her bill came to more than I expected, for I only had breakfast and tea, always "dining out" as I majestically expressed it. However, it was a relief to me to get it settled, and to go round with my box to Oakley Villas. An iron-monger had fixed my plate on to the railings for half a crown the evening before, and there it was, glittering in the sun, when I came round. It made me quite shy to look at it, and I slunk into the house with a feeling that every window in the street had a face in it.

But once inside, there was so much to be done that I did not know what I should turn to first. I

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bought a one-and-ninepenny broom and set to work. You notice that I am precise about small sums, because just there lies the whole key of the situation. In the yard I found a zinc pail with a hole in it, which was most useful, for by its aid I managed to carry up all the jaws with which my kitchen was heaped. Then with my new broom, my coat hung on a gas-bracket and my shirt sleeves turned to the elbow, I cleaned out the lower rooms and the hall, brushing the refuse into the yard. After that I did as much for the upper floor, with the result that I brought several square yards of dust down into the hall again, and undid my previous cleaning. This was disheartening, but at least it taught me to begin at the furthest point in future. When I had finished, I was as hot and dirty as if it were half-time at a football match. I thought of our tidy charwoman at home, and realised what splendid training she must be in.

Then came the arranging of the furniture. The hall was easily managed, for the planks were of a dark colour, which looked well of themselves. My oakum mat and my umbrella stand were the only things in it; but I bought three pegs for sixpence, and fastened them up at the side, completing the effect by hanging my two hats upon them. Finally, as the expanse of bare floor was depressing, I fixed one of my curtains about half-way down it, draping it back, so that it had a kind of oriental look, and excited a vague idea of suites of apartments beyond. It was a fine effect, and I was exceedingly proud of it.

From that I turned to the most important point of all—the arrangement of my consulting room. My experience with Cullingworth had taught me

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one thing at least,—that patients care nothing about your house if they only think that you can cure them. Once get that idea into their heads, and you may live in a vacant stall in a stable and write your prescriptions on the manger. Still, as this was, for many a day to come, to be the only furnished room in my house, it was worth a little planning to get it set out to the best advantage.

My red drugget I laid out in the centre, and fastened it down with brass-headed nails. It looked much smaller than I had hoped,—a little red island on an ocean of deal board, or a postage stamp in the middle of an envelope. In the centre of it I placed my table, with three medical works on one side of it, and my stethoscope and dresser's case upon the other. One chair went with the table, of course; and then I spent the next ten minutes in trying to determine whether the other two looked better together—a dense block of chairs, as it were—or scattered so that the casual glance would get the idea of numerous chairs. I placed them finally one on the right, and one in front of the table. Then I put down my fender, and nailed "Spring," "The Banjo Players," and "Windsor Castle" on to three of the walls, with the mental promise that my first spare half-crown should buy a picture for the fourth. In the window I placed my little square table, and balanced upon it a photograph with an ivory mounting and a nice plush frame which I had brought in my trunk. Finally, I found a pair of dark brown curtains among the job lot which I had bought at the sale, and these I put up and drew pretty close together, so that a subdued light came into the room, which toned everything down, and made the dark corners

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look furnished. When I had finished I really do not believe that any one could have guessed that the total contents of that room came to about thirty shillings.

Then I pulled my iron bed upstairs and fixed it in the room which I had from the first determined upon as my bed-chamber. I found an old packing case in the yard—a relic of my predecessor's removal—and this made a very good wash-hand stand for my basin and jug. When it was all fixed up I walked, swelling with pride, through my own chambers, giving a touch here and a touch there until I had it perfect. I wish my mother could see it—or, on second thoughts, I don't; for I know that her first act would be to prepare gallons of hot water, and to holystone the whole place down, from garret to cellar—and I know by my own small experience what that means.

Well, that's as far as I've got as yet. What trivial, trivial stuff, interesting to hardly a soul under heaven, save only about three! Yet it pleases me to write as long as I have your assurance that it pleases you to read. Pray, give my kindest remembrances to your wife, and to Camelford also, if he should happen to come your way. He was on the Mississippi when last I heard.

## XII

I OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 5th June, 1882.

WHEN I had made all those dispositions which I described with such painful prolixity in my last letter, my dear Harold, I sat down on my study chair, and I laid out the whole of my worldly wealth upon the table in front of me. I was startled when I looked at it,—three half-crowns, a florin, and four sixpences, or eleven and sixpence in all. I had expected to hear from Cullingworth before this; but at least he was always there, a trusty friend, at my back. Immediately upon engaging the house I had written him a very full letter, telling him that I had committed myself to keeping it for one year, but assuring him that I was quite convinced that with the help which he had promised me I should be able to hold my own easily. I described the favourable position of the house, and gave him every detail of the rent and neighbourhood. That letter would, I was sure, bring a reply from him which would contain my weekly remittance. One thing I had, above all, determined upon. That was that, whatever hardships might lie before me, I would fight through them without help from home. I knew, of course, that my mother would have sold everything down to her gold eye-glasses to help me, and that no thought of our recent disagreement would have weighed with her for an instant; but still a man has his feelings, you know, and I did not propose to act



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against her judgment and then run howling for help.

I sat in my house all day, with that ever-present sense of privacy and novelty which had thrilled me when I first shut the street door behind me. At evening I sallied out and bought a loaf of bread, half a pound of tea ("sweepings," they call it, and it cost eightpence), a tin kettle (fivepence), a pound of sugar, a tin of Swiss milk, and a tin of American potted meat. I had often heard my mother groan over the expenses of house-keeping, and now I began to understand what she meant. Two and ninepence went like a flash, but at least I had enough to keep myself going for some days.

There was a convenient gas bracket in the back room. I hammered a splinter of wood into the wall above it, and so made an arm upon which I could hang my little kettle and boil it over the flame. The attraction of the idea was that there was no immediate expense, and many things would have happened before I was called upon to pay the gas bill. The back room was converted then into both kitchen and dining room. The sole furniture consisted of my box, which served both as cupboard, as table, and as chair. My eatables were all kept inside, and when I wished for a meal I had only to pick them out and lay them on the lid, leaving room for myself to sit beside them.

It was only when I went to my bedroom that I realised the oversights which I had made in my furnishing. There was no mattress and no pillow or bed-clothes. My mind had been so centred upon the essentials for the practice, that I had never given a thought to my own private wants. I slept that night upon the irons of my bed, and

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rose up like St. Lawrence from the gridiron. My second suit of clothes with Bristowe's "Principles of Medicine" made an excellent pillow, while on a warm June night a man can do well wrapped in his overcoat. I had no fancy for second-hand bed-clothes, and determined, until I could buy some new ones, to make myself a straw pillow, and to put on both my suits of clothes on the colder nights. Two days later, however, the problem was solved in more luxurious style by the arrival of a big brown tin box from my mother, which was as welcome to me, and as much of a windfall, as the Spanish wreck to Robinson Crusoe. There were two pairs of thick blankets, two sheets, a counterpane, a pillow, a camp-stool, two stuffed bears' paws (of all things in this world!), two terra-cotta vases, a tea-cosy, two pictures in frames, several books, an ornamental ink-pot, and a number of antimacassars and coloured table-cloths. It is not until you own a table with a deal top and mahogany legs, that you understand what the true inner meaning of an ornamental cloth is. Right on the top of this treasure came a huge hamper from the Apothecaries' Society with the drugs which I had ordered. When they were laid out in line, the bottles extended right down one side of the dining-room and half down the other. As I walked through my house and viewed my varied possessions, I felt less radical in my views, and begun to think that there might be something in the rights of property after all.

And I added to my effects in a marvellous way. I made myself an excellent mattress out of some sacking and the straw in which the medicine bottles had been packed. Again, out of three

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shutters which belonged to the room, I rigged up a very effective side-table for my own den, which when covered with a red cloth, and ornamented with the bears' paws, might have cost twenty guineas for all that the patient could say to the contrary. I had done all this with a light heart and a good spirit, before the paralysing blow, which I shall have to tell you about, came upon me.

Of course it was obvious from the first that a servant was out of the question. I could not feed one, far less pay one, and I had no kitchen furniture. I must open my door to my own patients—let them think what they would of it. I must clean my own plate and brush down my own front; and these duties must be thoroughly done, come what might, for I must show a presentable outside to the public. Well, there was no great hardship in that, for I could do it under the cover of night. But I had had a suggestion from my mother which simplified matters immensely. She had written to say that if I wished she would send my little brother Paul to keep me company. I wrote back eagerly to agree. He was a hardy cheery little fellow of nine, who would, I knew, gladly share hard times with me; while, if they became unduly so, I could always have him taken home again. Some weeks must pass before he could come, but it cheered me to think of him. Apart from his company, there were a thousand ways in which he might be useful.

Who should come in on the second day but old Captain Whitehall? I was in the back room, trying how many slices I could make out of a pound of potted beef, when he rang my bell, and I only

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just shut my mouth in time to prevent my heart jumping out.

How that bell clanged through the empty house! I saw who it was, however, when I went into the hall; for the middle panels of my door are of glazed glass, so that I can always study a silhouette of my visitors before coming to closer quarters.

I was not quite sure yet whether I loathed the man or liked him. He was the most extraordinary mixture of charity and drunkenness, lechery and self-sacrifice that I had ever come across. But he brought into the house with him a whiff of cheeriness and hope for which I could not but be grateful. He had a large brown paper parcel under his arm, which he unwrapped upon my table, displaying a great jar. This he carried over and deposited on the centre of my mantelpiece.

"You will permit me, Dr. Munro, sir, to place this trifle in your room. It's lava, sir; lava from Vesuvius, and made in Naples. By —, you may think it's empty, Dr. Munro, sir, but it is full of my best wishes; and when you've got the best practice in this town you may point to that vase and tell how it came from a — skipper of an armed transport, who backed you from the start."

I tell you, Harold, the tears started to my eyes, and I could hardly gulp out a word or two of thanks. What a criss-cross of qualities in one human soul! It was not the deed or the words; but it was the almost womanly look in the eyes of this broken, drink-sodden old Bohemian—the sympathy and the craving for sympathy which I read there. Only for an instant though, for he hardened again into his usual reckless and half-defiant manner.

"There's another thing, sir. I've been thinking

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for some time back of having a medical opinion on myself. I'd be glad to put myself under your hands, if you would take a survey of me."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Dr. Munro, sir," said he, "I am a — walking museum. You could fit what *isn't* the matter with me on to the back of a — visiting card. If there's any complaint you want to make a special study of, just you come to me, sir, and see what I can do for you. It's not every one that can say that he has had cholera three times, and cured himself by living on red pepper and brandy. If you can only set the — little germs sneezing they'll soon leave you alone. That's my theory about cholera, and you should make a note of it, Dr. Munro, sir, for I was shipmates with fifty dead men when I was commanding the armed transport *Hegira* in the Black Sea, and I know — well what I am talking about."

I fill in Whitehall's oaths with blanks because I feel how hopeless it is to reproduce their energy and variety. I was amazed when he stripped, for his whole body was covered with a perfect panorama of tattooings, with a big blue Venus right over his heart.

"You may knock," said he, when I began to percuss his chest, "but I am — sure there's no one at home. They've all gone visiting one another. Sir John Hutton had a try some years ago. 'Why, dammy, man, where's your liver?' said he. 'Seems to me that some one has stirred you up with a porridge stick,' said he. 'Nothing is in its right place.' 'Except my heart, Sir John,' said I. 'Aye, by —, that will never lose its moorings while it has a flap left.'"

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Well, I examined him, and I found his own account not very far from the truth. I went over him carefully from head to foot, and there was not much left as Nature made it. He had mitral regurgitation, cirrhosis of the liver, Bright's disease, an enlarged spleen, and incipient dropsy. I gave him a lecture about the necessity of temperance, if not of total abstinence; but I fear that my words made no impression. He chuckled, and made a kind of clucking noise in his throat all the time that I was speaking, but whether in assent or remonstrance I cannot say.

He pulled out his purse when I had finished, but I begged him to look on my small service as a mere little act of friendship. This would not do at all, however, and he seemed so determined about it that I was forced to give way.

"My fee is five shillings, then, since you insist upon making it a business matter."

"Dr. Munro, sir," he broke out, "I have been examined by men whom I wouldn't throw a bucket of water over if they were burning, and I never paid them less than a guinea. Now that I have come to a gentleman and a friend, stiffen me purple if I pay one farthing less."

So, after much argument, it ended in the kind fellow going off and leaving a sovereign and a shilling on the edge of my table. The money burned my fingers, for I knew that his pension was not a very large one; and yet, since I could not avoid taking it, there was no denying that it was exceedingly useful. Out I sallied and spent sixteen shillings of it upon a new palliasse which should go under the straw mattress upon my bed. Already, you see, I was getting to a state of enervating

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luxury in my household arrangements, and I could only lull my conscience by reminding myself that little Paul would have to sleep with me when he came.

However, I had not quite got to the end of Whitehall's visit yet. When I went back I took down the beautiful lava jug, and inside I found his card. On the back was written, "You have gone into action, sir. It may be your fate to sink or to swim, but it can never be your degradation to strike. Die on the last plank and be damned to you, or come into port with your ensign flying mast high."

Was it not fine? It stirred my blood, and the words rang like a bugle call in my head. It braced me, and the time was coming when all the bracing I could get would not be too much. I copied it out, and pinned it on one side of my mantelpiece. On the other I stuck up a chip from Carlyle, which I daresay is as familiar to you as to me. "One way or another all the light, energy, and available virtue which we have does come out of us, and goes very infallibly into God's treasury, living and working through eternities there. We are not lost—not a single atom of us—of one of us." Now, there is a religious sentence which is intellectually satisfying, and therefore morally sound.

This last quotation leads to my second visitor. Such a row we had! I make a mistake in telling you about it, for I know your sympathies will be against me; but at least it will have the good effect of making you boil over into a letter of remonstrance and argument than which nothing could please me better.

Well, the second person whom I admitted through my door was the High Church curate of

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the parish—at least, I deduced High Church from his collar and the cross which dangled from his watch chain. He seemed to be a fine upstanding manly fellow—in fact, I am bound in honesty to admit that I have never met the washy tea-party curate outside the pages of *Punch*. As a body, I think they would compare very well in manliness (I do not say in brains) with as many young lawyers or doctors. Still, I have no love for the cloth. Just as cotton, which is in itself the most harmless substance in the world, becomes dangerous on being dipped into nitric acid, so the mildest of mortals is to be feared if he is once soaked in sectarian religion. If he has any rancour or hardness in him it will bring it out. I was therefore by no means overjoyed to see my visitor, though I trust that I received him with fitting courtesy. The quick little glance of surprise which he shot round him as he entered my consulting-room, told me that it was not quite what he had expected.

“You see, the Vicar has been away for two years,” he explained, “and we have to look after things in his absence. His chest is weak, and he can’t stand Birchespool. I live just opposite, and, seeing your plate go up, I thought I would call and welcome you into our parish.”

I told him that I was very much obliged for the attention. If he had stopped there all would have been well, and we should have had a pleasant little chat. But I suppose it was his sense of duty which would not permit it.

“I trust,” said he, “that we shall see you at St. Joseph’s.”

I was compelled to explain that it was not probable.



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"A Roman Catholic?" he asked, in a not unfriendly voice.

I shook my head, but nothing would discourage him.

"Not a dissenter!" he exclaimed, with a sudden hardening of his genial face.

I shook my head again.

"Ah, a little lax—a little remiss!" he said playfully, and with an expression of relief. "Professional men get into these ways. They have much to distract them. At least, you cling fast, no doubt, to the fundamental truths of Christianity?"

"I believe from the bottom of my heart," said I, "that the Founder of it was the best and sweetest character of whom we have any record in the history of this planet."

But instead of soothing him, my conciliatory answer seemed to be taken as a challenge. "I trust," said he severely, "that your belief goes further than that. You are surely prepared to admit that He was an incarnation of the Godhead."

I began to feel like the old badger in his hole who longs to have a scratch at the black muzzle which is so eager to draw him.

"Does it not strike you," I said, "that if He were but a frail mortal like ourselves, His life assumes a much deeper significance? It then becomes a standard toward which we might work. If, on the other hand, He was intrinsically of a different nature to ourselves, then His existence loses its point, since we and He start upon a different basis. To my mind it is obvious that such a supposition takes away the beauty and the moral of His life. If He was divine then He *could* not sin

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and there was an end of the matter. We who are not divine and can sin, have little to learn from a life like that."

"He triumphed over sin," said my visitor, as if a text or a phrase were an argument.

"A cheap triumph!" I said. "You remember that Roman emperor who used to descend into the arena fully armed, and pit himself against some poor wretch who had only a leaden foil which would double up at a thrust. According to your theory of your Master's life, you would have it that He faced the temptations of this world at such an advantage that they were only harmless leaden things, and not the sharp assailants which we find them. I confess, in my own case, that my sympathy is as strong when I think of His weaknesses as of His wisdom and His virtue. They come more home to me, I suppose, since I am weak myself."

"Perhaps you would be good enough to tell me what has impressed you as weak in His conduct?" asked my visitor stiffly.

"Well, the more human traits—'weak' is hardly the word I should have used. His rebuke of the Sabbatarians, His personal violence to the hucksters, His outbursts against the Pharisees, His rather unreasoning petulance against the fig-tree because it bore no fruit at the wrong season of the year, His very human feeling toward the housewife who bustled about when He was talking, His gratification that the ointment should have been used for Him instead of being devoted to the poor, His self-distrust before the crisis—these make me realise and love the man."

"You are a Unitarian, then. or rather, perhaps,

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a mere Deist?" said the curate, with a combative flush.

"You may label me as you like," I answered (and by this time I fear that I had got my preaching stop fairly out); "I don't pretend to know what truth is, for it is infinite, and I finite; but I know particularly well what it is *not*. It is not true that religion reached its acme nineteen hundred years ago, and that we are for ever to refer back to what was written and said in those days. No, sir; religion is a vital living thing, still growing and working, capable of endless extension and development, like all other fields of thought. There were many eternal truths spoken of old and handed down to us in a book, some parts of which may indeed be called holy. But there are others yet to be revealed; and if we are to reject them because they are not in those pages, we should act as wisely as the scientist who would take no notice of Kirschhoff's spectral analysis because there is no mention of it in Albertus Magnus. A modern prophet may wear a broadcloth coat and write to the magazines, but none the less he may be the little pipe which conveys a tiny squirt from the reservoirs of truth. Look at this!" I cried, rising and reading my Carlyle text. "That comes from no Hebrew prophet, but from a ratepayer in Chelsea. He and Emerson are also among the prophets. The Almighty has not said His last say to the human race, and He can speak through a Scotchman or a New Englander as easily as through a Jew. The Bible, sir, is a book which comes out in instalments, and 'To be continued,' not 'Finis,' is written at the end of it."

My visitor had been showing every sign of acute

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uneasiness during this long speech of mine. Finally, he sprang to his feet, and took his hat from the table.

"Your opinions are highly dangerous, sir," said he. "It is my duty to tell you so. You believe in nothing."

"Nothing which limits the power or the goodness of the Almighty," I answered.

"You have evolved all this from your own spiritual pride and self-sufficiency," said he, hotly. "Why do you not turn to that Deity whose name you use? Why do you not humble yourself before Him?"

"How do you know I don't?"

"You said yourself that you never went to church."

"I carry my own church about under my own hat," said I. "Bricks and mortar won't make a staircase to heaven. I believe with your Master that the human heart is the best temple. I am sorry to see that you differ from Him upon the point."

Perhaps it was too bad of me to say that. I might have guarded without countering. Anyhow, it had the effect of ending an interview which was becoming oppressive. My visitor was too indignant to answer, and swept out of the room without a word. From my window I could see him hurry down the street, a little black angry thing, very hot and troubled because he cannot measure the whole universe with his pocket square and compasses. Think of it, and think of what he is, an atom among atoms, standing at the meeting point of two eternities! But what am I, a brother atom, that I should judge him?

After all, I own to you, that it might have been

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better had I listened to what he had to say, and refused to give my own views. On the other hand, truth *must* be as broad as the universe which it is to explain, and therefore far broader than anything which the mind of man can conceive. A protest against sectarian thought must always be an aspiration toward truth. Who shall dare to claim a monopoly of the Almighty? It would be an insolence on the part of a solar system, and yet it is done every day by a hundred little cliques of mystery mongers. There lies the real impiety.

Well, the upshot of it all is, my dear Harold, that I have begun my practice by making an enemy of the man who, of the whole parish, has the most power to injure me. I know what my father would think about it, if he knew.

And now I come to the great event of this morning, from which I am still gasping. That villain Cullingworth has cut the painter, and left me to drift as best I may.

My post comes at eight o'clock in the morning, and I usually get my letters and take them into bed to read them. There was only one this morning, addressed in his strange, unmistakable hand. I made sure, of course, that it was my promised remittance, and I opened it with a pleasurable feeling of expectation. This is a copy of what I read:—

“When the maid was arranging your room after your departure, she cleared some pieces of torn paper from under the grate. Seeing my name upon them, she brought them, as in duty bound, to her mistress, who pasted them together and found that they formed a letter from your mother to you, in which I am referred to in the vilest terms, such

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as 'a bankrupt swindler' and 'the unscrupulous Cullingworth.' I can only say that we are astonished that you could have been a party to such a correspondence while you were a guest under our roof, and we refuse to have anything more to do with you in any shape or form."

That was a nice little morning greeting, was it not, after I had, on the strength of his promise, started in practice, and engaged a house for a year with a few shillings in my pocket? I have given up smoking for reasons of economy; but I felt that the situation was worthy of a pipe, so I climbed out of bed, gathered a little heap of tobacco-dust from the linings of my pocket, and smoked the whole thing over. That life-belt of which I had spoken so confidently, had burst, and left me to kick as best I might in very deep water. I read the note over and over again; and for all my dilemma, I could not help laughing at the mingled meanness and stupidity of the thing. The picture of the host and hostess busying themselves in gumming together the torn letters of their departed guest struck me as one of the funniest things I could remember. And there was the stupidity of it, because surely a child could have seen that my mother's attack was in answer to my defence. Why should we write a duet each saying the same thing? Well, I'm still very confused about it all, and I don't in the least know what I am going to do—more likely to die on the last plank, than to get into port with my ensign mast-high. I must think it out and let you know the result. Come what may, one thing only is sure, and that is that, in weal or woe, I remain ever your affectionate and garrulous friend.

### XIII

1 OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 12th June, 1882.

WHEN I wrote my last letter, my dear Harold, I was still gasping, like a cod on a sand-bank, after my final dismissal by Cullingworth. The mere setting of it all down in black and white seemed to clear the matter up, and I felt much more cheery by the time I had finished my letter. I was just addressing the envelope (observe what a continuous narrative you get of my proceedings!) when I was set jumping out of my carpet slippers by a ring at the bell. Through the glass panel I observed that it was a respectable-looking bearded individual with a top-hat. It was a patient. It *must* be a patient! Then first I realised what an entirely different thing it is to treat the patient of another man (as I had done with Horton) or to work a branch of another man's practice (as I had done with Cullingworth), and to have to do with a complete stranger on your own account. I had been thrilling to have one. Now that he had come I felt for an instant as if I would not open the door. But of course that was only a momentary weakness. I answered his ring with, I fear, rather a hypocritical air of insouciance, as though I had happened to find myself in the hall, and did not care to trouble the maid to ascend the stairs.

"Dr. Stark Munro?" he asked.

"Pray step in," I answered, and waved him into the consulting-room. He was a pompous, heavy-

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stepping, thick-voiced sort of person, but to me he was an angel from on high. I was nervous, and at the same time so afraid that he should detect my nervousness and lose confidence in me, that I found myself drifting into an extravagant geniality. He seated himself at my invitation and gave a husky cough.

"Ah," said I—I always prided myself on being quick at diagnosis—"bronchial, I perceive. These summer colds are a little trying."

"Yes," said he. "I've had it some time."

"With a little care and treatment——" I suggested.

He did not seem sanguine, but groaned and shook his head. "It's not about that I've come," said he.

"No?" My heart turned to lead.

"No, doctor." He took out a bulging notebook. "It's about a small sum that's due on the meter."

You'll laugh, Harold, but it was no laughing matter to me. He wanted eight and sixpence on account of something that the last tenant either had or had not done. Otherwise the company would remove the gas-meter. How little he could have guessed that the alternative he was presenting to me was either to pay away more than half my capital, or to give up cooking my food! I at last appeased him by a promise that I should look into the matter, and so escaped for the moment, badly shaken but still solvent. He gave me a good deal of information about the state of his tubes (his own, not the gas company's) before he departed; but I had rather lost interest in the subject since I had learned that he was being treated by his club doctor.



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That was the first of my morning incidents. My second followed hard upon the heels of it. Another ring came, and from my post of observation I saw that a gipsy's van, hung with baskets and wickerwork chairs, had drawn up at the door. Two or three people appeared to be standing outside. I understood that they wished me to purchase some of their wares, so I merely opened the door about three inches, said "No, thank you," and closed it. They seemed not to have heard me for they rang again, upon which I opened the door wider and spoke more decidedly. Imagine my surprise when they rang again. I flung the door open, and was about to ask them what they meant by their impudence, when one of the little group upon my doorstep said, "If you please, sir, it's the baby." Never was there such a change—from the outraged householder to the professional man. "Pray step in, madam," said I, in quite my most courtly style; and in they all came—the husband, the brother, the wife and the baby. The latter was in the early stage of measles. They were poor outcast sort of people, and seemed not to have sixpence among them; so my demands for a fee at the end of the consultation ended first in my giving the medicine for nothing, and finally adding fivepence in coppers, which was all the small change I had. A few more such patients and I am a broken man.

However, the two incidents together had the effect of taking up my attention and breaking the blow which I had had in the Cullingworth letter. It made me laugh to think that the apparent outsider should prove to be a patient, and the apparent patient an outsider. So back I went, in a much more judicial frame of mind, to read that precious

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document over again, and to make up my mind what it was that I should do.

And now I came to my first real insight into the depths which lie in the character of Cullingworth. I began by trying to recall how I could have torn up my mother's letters, for it is not usual for me to destroy papers in this manner. I have often been chaffed about the way in which I allow them to accumulate until my pockets become unbearable. The more I thought about it the more convinced I was that I could not have done anything of the sort; so finally I got out the little house jacket which I had usually worn at Bradfield, and I examined the sheaves of letters which it contained. It was there, Harold! Almost the very first one that I opened was the identical one from which Cullingworth was quoting in which my mother had described him in those rather forcible terms.

Well, this made me sit down and gasp. I am, I think, one of the most unsuspecting men upon earth, and through a certain easy-going indolence of disposition I never even think of the possibility of those with whom I am brought in contact trying to deceive me. It does not occur to me. But let me once get on that line of thought—let me have proof that there is reason for suspicion—and then all faith slips completely away from me. Now I could see an explanation for much which had puzzled me at Bradfield. Those sudden fits of ill-temper, the occasional ill-concealed animosity of Cullingworth—did they not mark the arrival of each of my mother's letters? I was convinced that they did. He had read them then—read them from the pockets of the little house coat which I used to leave carelessly in the hall when I put on my professional

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one to go out. I could remember, for example, how at the end of his illness his manner had suddenly changed on the very day when that final letter of my mother's had arrived. Yes, it was certain that he had read them from the beginning.

But a blacker depth of treachery lay beyond. If he had read them, and if he had been insane enough to think that I was acting disloyally toward him, why had he not said so at the time? Why had he contented himself with sidelong scowls and quarrelling over trivialities—breaking, too, into forced smiles when I had asked him point blank what was the matter? One obvious reason was that he could not tell his grievance without telling also how he had acquired his information. But I knew enough of Cullingworth's resource to feel that he could easily have got over such a difficulty as that. In fact, in this last letter he *had* got over it by his tale about the grate and the maid. He must have had some stronger reason for restraint. As I thought over the course of our relations I was convinced that his scheme was to lure me on by promises until I had committed myself, and then to abandon me, so that I should myself have no resource but to compound with my creditors—to be, in fact, that which my mother had called him.

But in that case he must have been planning it out almost from the beginning of my stay with him, for my mother's letters stigmatising his conduct had begun very early. For some time he had been uncertain how to proceed. Then he had invented the excuse (which seemed to me at the time, if you remember, to be quite inadequate) about the slight weekly decline in the practice in order to get me out of it. His next move was to

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persuade me to start for myself; and as this would be impossible without money, he had encouraged me to it by the promise of a small weekly loan. I remembered how he had told me not to be afraid about ordering furniture and other things, because tradesmen gave long credit to beginners, and I could always fall back upon him if necessary. He knew too from his own experience that the landlord would require at least a year's tenancy. Then he waited to spring his mine until I had written to say that I had finally committed myself, on which by return of post came his letter breaking the connection. It was so long and so elaborate a course of deceit, that I for the first time felt something like fear as I thought of Cullingworth. It was as though in the guise and dress of a man I had caught a sudden glimpse of something sub-human—of something so outside my own range of thought that I was powerless against it.

Well, I wrote him a little note—only a short one, but with, I hope, a bit of a barb to it. I said that his letter had been a source of gratification to me, as it removed the only cause for disagreement between my mother and myself. She had always thought him a blackguard, and I had always defended him; but I was forced now to confess that she had been right from the beginning. I said enough to show him that I saw through his whole plot; and I wound up by assuring him that if he thought he had done me any harm he had made a great mistake; for I had every reason to believe that he had unintentionally forced me into the very opening which I had most desired myself.

After this bit of bravado I felt better, and I thought over the situation. I was alone in a

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strange town, without connections, without introductions, with less than a pound in my pocket, and with no possibility of freeing myself from my responsibilities. I had no one at all to look to for help, for all my recent letters from home had given a dreary account of the state of things there. My poor father's health and his income were dwindling together. On the other hand, I reflected that there were some points in my favour. I was young. I was energetic. I had been brought up hard, and was quite prepared to rough it. I was well up in my work, and believed I could get on with patients. My house was an excellent one for my purpose, and I had already put the essentials of furniture into it. The game was not played out yet. I jumped to my feet and clenched my hand, and swore to the chandelier that it never should be played out until I had to beckon for help from the window.

For the next three days I had not a single ring at the bell of any sort whatever. A man could not be more isolated from his kind. It used to amuse me to sit upstairs and count how many of the passers-by stopped to look at my plate. Once (on a Sunday morning) there were over a hundred in an hour, and often I could see from their glancing over their shoulders as they walked on, that they were thinking or talking of the new doctor. This used to cheer me up, and make me feel that something was going on.

Every night between nine and ten I slip out and do my modest shopping, having already made my *menu* for the coming day. I come back usually with a loaf of bread, a paper of fried fish, or a bundle of saveloys. Then when I think things are suf-

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ficiently quiet, I go out and brush down the front with my broom, leaning it against the wall and looking up meditatively at the stars whenever any one passes. Then, later still, I bring out my polishing paste, my rag, and my chamois leather; and I assure you that if practice went by the brilliancy of one's plate, I should sweep the town.

Who do you think was the first person who broke this spell of silence? The ruffian whom I had fought under the lamp-post. He is a scissors-grinder it seems, and rang to know if I had a job for him. I could not help grinning at him when I opened the door and saw who it was. He showed no sign of recognising me, however, which is hardly to be wondered at.

The next comer was a real bonâ-fide patient, albeit a very modest one. She was a little anæmic old maid, a chronic hypochondriac I should judge, who had probably worked her way round every doctor in the town, and was anxious to sample this novelty. I don't know whether I gave her satisfaction. She said that she would come again on Wednesday, but her eyes shifted as she said it. One and sixpence was as much as she could pay, but it was very welcome. I can live three days on one and sixpence.

I think that I have brought economy down to its finest point. No doubt, for a short spell I could manage to live on a couple of pence a day; but what I am doing now is not to be a mere spurt, but my regular mode of life for many a month to come. My tea and sugar and milk (Swiss) come collectively to one penny a day. The loaf is at two-pence three-farthings, and I consume one a day. My dinner consists in rotation of one third of a

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pound of bacon, cooked over the gas (twopence halfpenny), or two saveloys (twopence), or two pieces of fried fish (twopence), or a quarter of an eightpenny tin of Chicago beef (twopence). Any one of these, with a due allowance of bread and water, makes a most substantial meal. Butter I have discarded for the present. My actual board therefore comes well under sixpence a day, but I am a patron of literature to the extent of a halfpenny a day, which I expend upon an evening paper; for with events hurrying on like this in Alexandria, I cannot bear to be without the news. Still I often reproach myself with that halfpenny, for if I went out in the evening and looked at the placards I might save it, and yet have a general idea of what is going on. Of course, a halfpenny a night sounds nothing, but think of a shilling a month! Perhaps you picture me as bloodless and pulled down on this diet! I am thin, it is true, but I never felt more fit in my life. So full of energy am I that I start off sometimes at ten at night and walk hard until two or three in the morning. I dare not go out during the day, you see, for fear that I should miss a patient. I have asked my mother not to send little Paul down yet until I see my way more clearly.

Old Whitehall came in to see me the other day. The object of his visit was to invite me to dinner, and the object of the dinner to inaugurate my starting in practice. If I were the kind old fellow's son he could not take a deeper interest in me and my prospects.

"By —, Dr. Munro, sir," said he, "I've asked every — man in Birchespool that's got anything the matter with him. You'll have the lot as pa-

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tients within a week. There's Fraser, who's got a touch of Martell's three star. He's coming. And there's Saunders, who talks about nothing but his spleen. I'm sick of his —— spleen! But I asked him. And there's Turpey's wound! This wet weather sets it tingling, and his own surgeon can do nothing but dab it with vaseline. He'll be there. And there's Carr, who is drinking himself to death. He has not much for the doctors, but what there is you may as well have."

All next day he kept popping in to ask me questions about the dinner. Should we have clear soup or ox-tail? Didn't I think that burgundy was better than port and sherry? The day after was the celebration itself, and he was in with a bulletin immediately after breakfast. The cooking was to be done at a neighbouring confectioner's. The landlady's son was coming in to wait. I was sorry to see that Whitehall was already slurring his words together, and had evidently been priming himself heavily. He looked in again in the afternoon to tell me what a good time we should have. So-and-so could talk well, and the other man could sing a song. He was so far gone by now, that I ventured (in the capacity of medical adviser) to speak to him about it.

"It's not the liquor, Dr. Munro, sir," said he earnestly. "It's the —— relaxing air of this town. But I'll go home and I'll lie down, and be as fresh as paint to welcome my guests."

But the excitement of the impending event must have been too much for him. When I arrived at five minutes to seven, Turpey, the wounded lieutenant, met me in the hall with a face of ill-omen.

"It's all up with Whitehall," said he.



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"What's the matter?"

"Blind, speechless and paralytic. Come and look."

The table in his room was nicely laid for dinner, and several decanters with a large cold tart lay upon the sideboard. On the sofa was stretched our unfortunate host, his head back, his forked beard pointing to the cornice, and a half-finished tumbler of whiskey upon the chair beside him. All our shakes and shouts could not break in upon that serene drunkenness.

"What are we to do?" gasped Turpey.

"We must not let him make an exhibition of himself. We had better get him away before any one else arrives."

So we bore him off, all in coils and curves like a dead python, and deposited him upon his bed. When we returned three other guests had arrived.

"You'll be sorry to hear that Whitehall is not very well," said Turpey. "Dr. Munro thought it would be better that he should not come down."

"In fact, I have ordered him to bed," said I.

"Then I move that Mr. Turpey be called upon to act as host," said one of the new-comers; and so it was at once agreed.

Presently the other men arrived, but there was no sign of the dinner. We waited for a quarter of an hour, but nothing appeared. The landlady was summoned, but could give no information.

"Captain Whitehall ordered it from a confectioner's, sir," said she, in reply to the lieutenant's cross-examination. "He did not tell me which confectioner's. It might have been any one of four or five. He only said that it would all come right, and that I should bake an apple tart."

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Another quarter of an hour passed, and we were all ravenous. It was evident that Whitehall had made some mistake. We began to roll our eyes toward the apple pie, as the boat's crew does toward the boy in the stories of shipwreck. A large hairy man, with an anchor tattooed upon his hand, rose and set the pie in front of Turpey.

"What d'you say, gentlemen,—shall I serve it out?"

We all drew up at the table with a decision which made words superfluous. In five minutes the pie dish was as clean as when the cook first saw it. And our ill-luck vanished with the pie. A minute later the landlady's son entered with the soup; and cod's head, roast beef, game and ice pudding followed in due succession. It all came from some misunderstanding about time. But we did them justice, in spite of the curious *hors d'œuvre* with which we had started; and a pleasanter dinner or a more enjoyable evening I have seldom had.

"Sorry I was so bowled over, Dr. Munro, sir," said Whitehall next morning. "I need hilly country and a bracing air, not a — croquet lawn like this. Well, I'm — glad to hear that you gentlemen enjoyed yourselves, and I hope you found everything to your satisfaction."

I assured him that we did; but I had not the heart to tell him about the apple pie.

I tell you these trivial matters, my dear Harold, just to show you that I am not down on my luck, and that my life is not pitched in the minor key altogether, in spite of my queer situation. But, to turn to graver things: I was right glad to get your letter, and to read all your denunciations about dogmatic science. Don't imagine that my withers

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are wrong by what you say, for I agree with almost every word of it.

The man who claims that we can know nothing is, to my mind, as unreasonable as he who insists that everything has been divinely revealed to us. I know nothing more unbearable than the complacent type of scientist who knows very exactly all that he does know, but has not imagination enough to understand what a speck his little accumulation of doubtful erudition is when compared with the immensity of our ignorance. He is the person who thinks that the universe can be explained by laws, as if a law did not require construction as well as a world! The motion of the engine can be explained by the laws of physics, but that has not made the foregoing presence of an engineer less obvious. In this world, however, part of the beautiful poise of things depends upon the fact that whenever you have an exaggerated fanatic of any sort, his exact opposite at once springs up to neutralise him. You have a Mameluke: up jumps a Crusader. You have a Fenian: up jumps an Orangeman. Every force has its recoil. And so these more hide-bound scientists must be set against those gentlemen who still believe that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C.

After all, true science must be synonymous with religion, since science is the acquirement of fact; and facts are all that we have from which to deduce what we are and why we are here. But surely the more we pry into the methods by which results are brought about, the more stupendous and wonderful becomes the great unseen power which lies behind, the power which drifts the solar system in safety through space, and yet adjusts the length of

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the insect's proboscis to the depth of the honey-bearing flower. What is that central intelligence? You may fit up your dogmatic scientist with a 800-diameter microscope, and with a telescope with a six-foot speculum, but neither near nor far can he get a trace of that great driving power.

What should we say of a man who has a great and beautiful picture submitted to him, and who, having satisfied himself that the account given of the painting of the picture is incorrect, at once concludes that no one ever painted it, or at least asserts that he has no possible means of knowing whether an artist has produced it or not? That is, as it seems to me, a fair statement of the position of some of the more extreme agnostics. "Is not the mere existence of the picture in itself a proof that a skilful artist has been busied upon it?" one might ask. "Why, no," says the objector. "It is possible that the picture produced itself by the aid of certain rules. Besides, when the picture was first submitted to me I was assured that it had all been produced within a week, but by examining it I am able to say with certainty that it has taken a considerable time to put together. I am therefore of opinion that it is questionable whether any one ever painted it at all."

Leaving this exaggerated scientific caution on the one side, and faith on the other, as being equally indefensible, there remains the clear line of reasoning that a universe implies the existence of a universe maker, and that we may deduce from it some of His attributes, His power, His wisdom, His forethought for small wants, His providing of luxuries for His creatures. On the other hand, do not let us be disingenuous enough to shirk the

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mystery which lies in pain, in cruelty, in all which seems to be a slur upon His work. The best that we can say for them is to hope that they are not as bad as they seem, and possibly lead to some higher end. The voices of the ill-used child and of the tortured animal are the hardest of all for the philosopher to answer.

Good-bye, old chap! It is quite delightful to think that on one point at least we are in agreement.

## XIV

1 OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 15th January, 1883.

You write reproachfully, my dear Harold, and you say that absence must have weakened our close friendship, since I have not sent you a line during this long seven months. The real truth of the matter is that I had not the heart to write to you until I could tell you something cheery; and something cheery has been terribly long in coming. At present I can only claim that the cloud has perhaps thinned a little at the edges.

You see by the address of this letter that I still hold my ground, but between ourselves it has been a terrible fight, and there have been times when that last plank of which old Whitehall wrote, seemed to be slipping out of my clutch. I have ebbed and flowed, sometimes with a little money, sometimes without. At my best I was living hard, at my worst I was very close upon starvation. I have lived for a whole day upon the crust of a loaf, when I had ten pounds in silver in the drawer of my table. But those ten pounds had been most painfully scraped together for my quarter's rent, and I would have tried twenty-four hours with a tight leather belt before I would have broken in upon it. For two days I could not raise a stamp to send a letter. I have smiled when I have read in my evening paper of the privations of our fellows in Egypt. Their broken victuals would have been a banquet to me. However, what odds how you

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take your carbon and nitrogen and oxygen, as long as you *do* get it? The garrison of Oakley Villas has passed the worst, and there is no talk of surrender.

It was not that I have had no patients. They have come in as well as could be expected. Some, like the little old maid, who was the first, never returned. I fancy that a doctor who opened his own door forfeited their confidence. Others have become warm partisans. But they have nearly all been very poor people; and when you consider how many one and sixpences are necessary in order to make up the fifteen pounds which I must find every quarter for rent, taxes, gas and water, you will understand that even with some success, I have still found it a hard matter to keep anything in the portmanteau which serves me as larder. However, my boy, two quarters are paid up, and I enter upon a third one with my courage unabated. I have lost about a stone, but not my heart.

I have rather a vague recollection of when it was exactly that my last was written. I fancy that it must have been a fortnight after my start, immediately after my breach with Cullingworth. It's rather hard to know where to begin when one has so many events to narrate, disconnected from each other, and trivial in themselves, yet which have each loomed large as I came upon them; though they look small enough now that they are so far astern. As I have mentioned Cullingworth, I may as well say first the little that is to be said about him. I answered his letter in the way which I have, I think, already described. I hardly expected to hear from him again; but my note had

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evidently stung him, and I had a brusque message in which he said that if I wished him to believe in my "bonâ-fides" (whatever he may have meant by that), I would return the money which I had had during the time that I was with him at Bradfield. To this I replied that the sum was about twelve pounds; that I still retained the message in which he had guaranteed me three hundred pounds if I came to Bradfield, that the balance in my favour was two hundred and eighty-eight pounds; and that unless I had a cheque by return, I should put the matter into the hands of my solicitor. This put a final end to our correspondence.

There was one other incident, however. One day after I had been in practice about two months, I observed a bearded commonplace-looking person lounging about on the other side of the road. In the afternoon he was again visible from my consulting-room window. When I saw him there once more next morning, my suspicions were aroused, and they became certainties when, a day or so afterward, I came out of a patient's house in a poor street, and saw the same fellow looking into a greengrocer's shop upon the other side. I walked to the end of the street, waited round the corner, and met him as he came hurrying after.

"You can go back to Dr. Cullingworth, and tell him that I have as much to do as I care for," said I. "If you spy upon me after this it will be at your own risk."

He shuffled and coloured, but I walked on and saw him no more. There was no one on earth who could have had a motive for wanting to know exactly what I was doing except Cullingworth; and the man's silence was enough in itself to prove



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that I was right. I have heard nothing of Cullingworth since.

I had a letter from my uncle in the Artillery, Sir Alexander Munro, shortly after my start, telling me that he had heard of my proceedings from my mother, and that he hoped to learn of my success. He is, as I think you know, an ardent Wesleyan, like all my father's people, and he told me that the chief Wesleyan minister in the town was an old friend of his own, that he had learned from him that there was no Wesleyan doctor, and that, being of a Wesleyan stock myself, if I would present the enclosed letter of introduction to the minister, I should certainly find it very much to my advantage. I thought it over, Harold, and it seemed to me that it would be playing it rather low down to use a religious organisation to my own advantage, when I condemned them in the abstract. It was a sore temptation, but I destroyed the letter.

I had one or two pieces of luck in the way of accidental cases. One (which was of immense importance to me) was that of a grocer named Haywood, who fell down in a fit outside the door of his shop. I was passing on my way to see a poor labourer with typhoid. You may believe that I saw my chance, hustled in, treated the man, conciliated the wife, tickled the child, and gained over the whole household. He had these attacks periodically, and made an arrangement with me by which I was to deal with him, and we were to balance bills against each other. It was a ghoulish compact, by which a fit to him meant butter and bacon to me, while a spell of health for Haywood sent me back to dry bread and saveloys. However, it enabled me to put by for the rent many a

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shilling which must otherwise have gone in food. At last, however, the poor fellow died, and there was our final settlement.

Two small accidents occurred near my door (it was a busy crossing), and though I got little enough from either of them, I ran down to the newspaper office on each occasion, and had the gratification of seeing in the evening edition that "the driver, though much shaken, is pronounced by Dr. Stark Munro, of Oakley Villas, to have suffered no serious injury." As Cullingworth used to say, it is hard enough for the young doctor to push his name into any publicity, and he must take what little chances he has. Perhaps the fathers of the profession would shake their heads over such a proceeding in a little provincial journal; but I was never able to see that any of them were very averse from seeing their own names appended to the bulletin of some sick statesman in *The Times*.

And then there came another and a more serious accident. This would be about two months after the beginning, though already I find it hard to put things in their due order. A lawyer in the town named Dickson was riding past my windows when the horse reared up and fell upon him. I was eating saveloys in the back room at the time, but I heard the noise and rushed to the door in time to meet the crowd who were carrying him in. They flooded into my house, thronged my hall, dirtied my consulting room, and even pushed their way into my back room, which they found elegantly furnished with a portmanteau, a lump of bread, and a cold sausage.

However, I had no thought for any one but my patient, who was groaning most dreadfully. I saw

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that his ribs were right, tested his joints, ran my hand down his limbs, and concluded that there was no break or dislocation. He had strained himself in such a way, however, that it was very painful to him to sit or to walk. I sent for an open carriage, therefore, and conveyed him to his home, I sitting with my most professional air, and he standing straight up between my hands. The carriage went at a walk, and the crowd trailed behind, with all the folk looking out of the windows, so that a more glorious advertisement could not be conceived. It looked like the advance guard of a circus. Once at his house, however, professional etiquette demanded that I should hand the case over to the family attendant, which I did with as good a grace as possible—not without some lingering hope that the old established practitioner might say, "You have taken such very good care of my patient, Dr. Munro, that I should not dream of removing him from your hands." On the contrary, he snatched it away from me with avidity, and I retired with some credit, an excellent advertisement, and a guinea.

These are one or two of the points of interest which show above the dead monotony of my life—small enough, as you see, but even a sandhill looms large in Holland. In the main, it is a dreary sordid record of shillings gained and shillings spent—of scraping for this and scraping for that, with ever some fresh slip of blue paper fluttering down upon me, left so jauntily by the tax-collector, and meaning such a dead-weight pull to me. The irony of my paying a poor-rate used to amuse me. I should have been collecting it. Thrice at a crisis I pawned my watch, and thrice I rallied and rescued it. But

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how am I to interest you in the details of such a career? Now, if a fair countess had been so good as to slip on a piece of orange peel before my door, or if the chief merchant in the town had been saved by some *tour-de-force* upon my part, or if I had been summoned out at midnight to attend some nameless person in a lonely house with a princely fee for silence—then I should have something worthy of your attention. But the long months and months during which I listened to the throb of the charwoman's heart and the rustle of the greengrocer's lungs, present little which is not dull and dreary. No good angels came my way.

Wait a bit, though! One did. I was awakened at six in the morning one day by a ringing at my bell, and creeping to the angle of the stair I saw through the glass a stout gentleman in a top-hat outside. Much excited, with a thousand guesses capping one another in my head, I ran back, pulled on some clothes, rushed down, opened the door, and found myself in the grey morning light face to face with Horton. The good fellow had come down from Merton in an excursion train, and had been travelling all night. He had an umbrella under his arm, and two great straw baskets in each hand, which contained, when unpacked, a cold leg of mutton, half a dozen of beer, a bottle of port, and all sorts of pasties and luxuries. We had a great day together, and when he rejoined his excursion in the evening he left a very much cheerier man than he had found.

Talking of cheeriness you misunderstand me, Harold, if you think (as you seem to imply) that I take a dark view of things. It is true that I dis-

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card some consolations which you possess, because I cannot convince myself that they are genuine; but in this world, at least, I see immense reason for hope, and as to the next I am confident that all will be for the best. From annihilation to beatification I am ready to adapt myself to whatever the great Designer's secret plan may be.

But there is much in the prospects of this world to set a man's heart singing. Good is rising and evil sinking like oil and water in a bottle. The race is improving. There are far fewer criminal convictions. There is far more education. People sin less and think more. When I meet a brutal-looking fellow I often think that he and his type may soon be as extinct as the great auk. I am not sure that in the interest of the 'ologies we ought not to pickle a few specimens of Bill Sykes, to show our children's children what sort of a person he was.

And then the more we progress the more we tend to progress. We advance not in arithmetical but in geometrical progression. We draw compound interest on the whole capital of knowledge and virtue which has been accumulated since the dawning of time. Some eighty thousand years are supposed to have existed between paleolithic and neolithic man. Yet in all that time he only learned to grind his flint stones instead of chipping them. But within our fathers' lives what changes have there not been? The railway and the telegraph, chloroform and applied electricity. Ten years now go further than a thousand then, not so much on account of our finer intellects as because the light we have shows us the way to more. Primeval man stumbled along with peering eyes, and

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

slow, uncertain footsteps. Now we walk briskly toward our unknown goal.

And I wonder what that goal is to be! I mean, of course, as far as this world is concerned. Ever since man first scratched hieroglyphics upon an ostrakon, or scribbled with sepia upon papyrus, he must have wondered, as we wonder to-day. I suppose that we *do* know a little more than they. We have an arc of about three thousand years given us, from which to calculate out the course to be described by our descendants; but that arc is so tiny when compared to the vast ages which Providence uses in working out its designs that our deductions from it must, I think, be uncertain. Will civilisation be swamped by barbarism? It happened once before, because the civilised were tiny specks of light in the midst of darkness. But what, for example, could break down the great country in which you dwell? No, our civilisation will endure and grow more complex. Man will live in the air and below the water. Preventive medicine will develop until old age shall become the sole cause of death. Education and a more socialistic scheme of society will do away with crime. The English-speaking races will unite, with their centre in the United States. Gradually the European States will follow their example. War will become rare, but more terrible. The forms of religion will be abandoned, but the essence will be maintained; so that one universal creed will embrace the whole civilised earth, which will preach trust in that central power, which will be as unknown then as now. That's my horoscope, and after that the solar system may be ripe for picking. But Harold Swanborough and Stark Munro will

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

be blowing about on the west wind, and dirtying the panes of careful housewives long before the half of it has come to pass.

And then man himself will change, of course. The teeth are going rapidly. You've only to count the dentists' brass plates in Birchespool to be sure of that. And the hair also. And the sight. Instinctively, when we think of the more advanced type of young man, we picture him as bald, and with double eye-glasses. I am an absolute animal myself, and my only sign of advance is that two of my back teeth are going. On the other hand, there is some evidence in favour of the development of a sixth sense—that of perception. If I had it now I should know that you are heartily weary of all my generalisations and dogmatism.

And certainly there must be a spice of dogmatism in it when we begin laying down laws about the future; for how do we know that there are not phases of nature coming upon us of which we have formed no conception? After all, a few seconds are a longer fraction of a day than an average life is of the period during which we know that the world has been in existence. But if a man lived only for a few seconds of daylight, his son the same, and his son the same, what would their united experiences after a hundred generations tell them of the phenomenon which we call night? So all our history and knowledge is no guarantee that our earth is not destined for experiences of which we can form no conception.

But to drop down from the universe to my own gnat's buzz of an existence, I think I have told you everything that might interest you of the first six months of my venture. Toward the end of

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that time my little brother Paul came down—and the best of companions he is! He shares the discomforts of my little *ménage* in the cheeriest spirit, takes me out of my blacker humours, goes long walks with me, is interested in all that interests me (I always talk to him exactly as if he were of my own age), and is quite ready to turn his hand to anything, from boot-blackening to medicine-carrying. His one dissipation is cutting out of paper, or buying in lead (on the rare occasion when we find a surplus), an army of little soldiers. I have brought a patient into the consulting-room, and found a torrent of cavalry, infantry, and artillery pouring across the table. I have been myself attacked as I sat silently writing, and have looked up to find fringes of sharp-shooters pushing up toward me, columns of infantry in reserve, a troop of cavalry on my flank, while a battery of pea muzzle-loaders on the ridge of my medical dictionary has raked my whole position—with the round, smiling face of the general behind it all. I don't know how many regiments he has on a peace footing; but if serious trouble were to break out, I am convinced that every sheet of paper in the house would spring to arms.

One morning I had a great idea which has had the effect of revolutionising our domestic economy. It was at the time when the worst pinch was over, and when we had got back as far as butter and occasional tobacco, with a milkman calling daily; which gives you a great sense of swagger when you have not been used to it.

“Paul, my boy,” said I, “I see my way to fitting up this house with a whole staff of servants for nothing.”



## THE, STARK MUNRO LETTERS

He looked pleased, but not surprised. He had a wholly unwarranted confidence in my powers; so that if I had suddenly declared that I saw my way to tilting Queen Victoria from her throne and seating myself upon it, he would have come without a question to aid and abet.

I took a piece of paper and wrote, "To Let. A basement floor, in exchange for services. Apply 1 Oakley Villas."

"There, Paul," said I, "run down to the *Evening News* office, and pay a shilling for three insertions."

There was no need of three insertions. One would have been ample. Within half an hour of the appearance of the first edition, I had an applicant at the end of my bell-wire, and for the remainder of the evening Paul was ushering them in and I interviewing them with hardly a break. I should have been prepared at the outset to take anything in a petticoat; but as we saw the demand increase, our conditions went up and up: white aprons, proper dress for answering door, doing beds and boots, cooking,—we became more and more exacting. So at last we made our selection; a Miss Wotton, who asked leave to bring her sister with her. She was a hard-faced brusque-mannered person, whose appearance in a bachelor's household was not likely to cause a scandal. Her nose was in itself a certificate of virtue. She was to bring her furniture into the basement, and I was to give her and her sister one of the two upper rooms for a bedroom.

They moved in a few days later. I was out at the time, and the first intimation I had was finding three little dogs in my hall when I returned. I had her up, and explained that this was a breach of

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

contract, and that I had no thoughts of running a menagerie. She pleaded very hard for her little dogs, which it seems are a mother and two daughters of some rare breed; so I at last gave in on the point. The other sister appeared to lead a subterranean troglodytic sort of existence; for, though I caught a glimpse of her whisking round the corner at times, it was a good month before I could have sworn to her in a police court.

For a time the arrangement worked well, and then there came complications. One morning, coming down earlier than usual, I saw a small bearded man undoing the inside chain of my door. I captured him before he could get it open. "Well," said I, "what's this?"

"If you please, sir," said he, "I'm Miss Wotton's husband."

Dreadful doubts of my housekeeper flashed across my mind, but I thought of her nose and was reassured. An examination revealed everything. She was a married woman. The lines were solemnly produced. Her husband was a seaman. She had passed as a miss, because she thought I was more likely to take a housekeeper without encumbrances. Her husband had come home unexpectedly from a long voyage, and had returned last night. And then—plot within plot—the other woman was not her sister, but a friend whose name was Miss Williams. She thought I was more likely to take two sisters than two friends. So we all came to know who the other was; and I, having given Jack permission to remain, assigned the other top room to Miss Williams. From absolute solitude I seemed to be rapidly developing into the keeper of a casual ward.

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It was a never-failing source of joy to us to see the procession pass on the way to their rooms at night. First came a dog; then Miss Williams, with a candle; then Jack; then another dog; and, finally, Mrs. Wotton, with her candle in one hand and another dog under her arm. Jack was with us for three weeks; and as I made him holystone the whole place down twice a week until the boards were like a quarter deck, we got something out of him in return for his lodging.

About this time, finding a few shillings over and no expense imminent, I laid down a cellar, in the shape of a four and a half gallon cask of beer, with a firm resolution that it should never be touched save on high days and holidays, or when guests had to be entertained. Shortly afterward Jack went away to sea again; and after his departure there were several furious quarrels between the women down below, which filled the whole house with treble reproaches and repartees. At last one evening Miss Williams—the quiet one—came to me and announced with sobs that she must go. Mrs. Wotton made her life unbearable, she said. She was determined to be independent, and had fitted up a small shop in a poor quarter of the town. She was going now, at once, to take possession of it.

I was sorry, because I liked Miss Williams, and I said a few words to that effect. She got as far as the hall door, and then came rustling back again into the consulting-room. "Take a drink of your own beer!" she cried, and vanished.

It sounded like some sort of slang imprecation. If she had said "Oh, pull up your socks!" I should have been less surprised. And then sud-

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

denly the words took a dreadful meaning in my mind, and I rushed to the cellar. The cask was tilted forward on the trestles. I struck it and it boomed like a drum. I turned the tap, and not one drop appeared. Let us draw a veil over the painful scene. Suffice it that Mrs. Wotton got her marching orders then and there—and that next day Paul and I found ourselves alone in the empty house once more.

But we were demoralised by luxury. We could no longer manage without a helper—especially now in the winter time, when fires had to be lit—the most heart-breaking task that a man can undertake. I bethought me of the quiet Miss Williams, and hunted her up in her shop. She was quite willing to come, and saw how she could get out of the rent; but the difficulty lay with her stock. This sounded formidable at first, but when I came to learn that the whole thing had cost eleven shillings, it did not appear insurmountable. In half an hour my watch was pawned, and the affair concluded. I returned with an excellent house-keeper, and with a larger basketful of inferior Swedish matches, bootlaces, cakes of black lead, and little figures made of sugar than I should have thought it possible to get for the money. So now we have settled down, and I hope that a period of comparative peace lies before us.

Good-bye, old chap, and never think that I forget you. Your letters are read and re-read with avidity. I think I have every line you ever wrote me. You simply knock Paley out every time. I am so glad that you got out of that brewery business all right. For a time I was really afraid that you must either lose your money or else risk

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

more upon the shares. I can only thank you for your kind offer of blank cheques.

It is wonderful that you should have slipped back into your American life so easily after your English hiatus. As you say, however, it is not a change but only a modification, since the root idea is the same in each. Is it not strange how the two great brothers are led to misunderstand each other? A man is punished for private libel (over here at any rate), although the consequences can only be slight. But a man may perpetrate international libel, which is a very heinous and far-reaching offence, and there is no law in the world which can punish him. Think of the contemptible crew of journalists and satirists who forever picture the Englishman as haughty and h-dropping, or the American as vulgar and expectorating. If some millionaire would give them all a trip round the world we should have some rest—and if the plug came out of the boat midway it would be more restful still. And your vote-hunting politicians with their tail-twisting campaigns, and our editors of the supercilious weeklies with their inane tone of superiority, if they were all aboard how much clearer we should be! Once more adieu, and good luck!

## XV

1 OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 3rd August, 1883.

Do you think that such a thing as chance exists? Rather an explosive sentence to start a letter with; but pray cast your mind back over your own life, and tell me if you think that we really are the sports of chance. You know how often the turning down this street or that, the accepting or rejecting of an invitation, may deflect the whole current of our lives into some other channel. Are we mere leaves, fluttered hither and thither by the wind, or are we rather, with every conviction that we are free agents, carried steadily along to a definite and pre-determined end? I confess that as I advance through life, I become more and more confirmed in that fatalism to which I have always had an inclination.

Look at it in this way. We know that many of the permanent facts of the universe are *not* chance. It is not chance that the heavenly bodies swing clear of each other, that the seed is furnished with the apparatus which will drift it to a congenial soil, that the creature is adapted to its environment. Show me a whale with its great-coat of fat, and I want no further proof of design. But logically, as it seems to me, *all* must be design, or *all* must be chance. I do not see how one can slash a line right across the universe, and say that all to the right of that is chance, and all to the left is pre-ordained. You would then have to contend that

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things which on the face of them are of the same class, are really divided by an impassable gulf, and that the lower are regulated, while the higher are not. You would, for example, be forced to contend that the number of articulations in a flea's hind leg has engaged the direct superintendence of the Creator, while the mischance which killed a thousand people in a theatre depended upon the dropping of a wax vesta upon the floor, and was an unforeseen flaw in the chain of life. This seems to me to be unthinkable.

It is a very superficial argument to say that if a man holds the views of a fatalist he will therefore cease to strive, and will wait resignedly for what fate may send him. The objector forgets that among the other things fated is that we of northern blood *should* strive and should *not* sit down with folded hands. But when a man has striven, when he has done all he knows, and when, in spite of it, a thing comes to pass, let him wait ten years before he says that it is a misfortune. It is part of the main line of his destiny then, and is working to an end. A man loses his fortune; he gains earnestness. His eyesight goes; it leads him to a spirituality. The girl loses her beauty; she becomes more sympathetic. We think we are pushing our own way bravely, but there is a great Hand in ours all the time.

You'll wonder what has taken me off on this line. Only that I seem to see it all in action in my own life. But, as usual, I have started merrily off with an appendix, so I shall go back and begin my report as nearly as possible where I ended the last. First of all, I may say generally that the clouds were thinning then, and that they broke shortly

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afterward. During the last few months we have never once quite lost sight of the sun.

You remember that we (Paul and I) had just engaged a certain Miss Williams to come and keep house for us. I felt that on the basement-lodger principle I had not control enough; so we now entered upon a more business-like arrangement, by which a sum (though, alas! an absurdly small one) was to be paid her for her services. I would it had been ten times as much, for a better and a more loyal servant man never had. Our fortunes seemed to turn from the hour that she re-entered the house.

Slowly, week by week, and month by month, the practice began to spread and to strengthen. There were spells when never a ring came to the bell, and it seemed as though all our labour had gone for nothing—but then would come other days when eight and ten names would appear in my ledger. Where did it come from? you will ask. Some from old Whitehall and his circle of Bohemians. Some from accident cases. Some from new-comers to the town who drifted to me. Some from people whom I met first in other capacities. An insurance superintendent gave me a few cases to examine, and that was a very great help. Above all, I learned a fact which I would whisper in the ear of every other man who starts, as I have done, a stranger among strangers. Do not think that practice will come to you. You must go to it. You may sit upon your consulting-room chair until it breaks under you, but without purchase or partnership you will make little or no progress. The way to do it is to go out, to mix everywhere with men, to let them know you. You will come back many a time and be told by a reproachful house-



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keeper that some one has been for you in your absence. Never mind! Go out again. A noisy smoking concert where you will meet eighty men is better for you than the patient or two whom you might have seen at home. It took me some time to realise, but I speak now as one who knows.

But—there is a great big “but” in the case. You must ride yourself on the curb the whole time. Unless you are sure—absolutely sure—that you can do this, you are far best at home. You must never for one instant forget yourself. You must remember what your object is in being there. You must inspire respect. Be friendly, genial, convivial—what you will—but preserve the tone and bearing of a gentleman. If you can make yourself respected and liked you will find every club and society that you join a fresh introduction to practice. But beware of drink! Above everything, beware of drink! The company that you are in may condone it in each other, but never in the man who wishes them to commit their lives to his safe-keeping. A slip is fatal—a half slip perilous. Make your rule of life and go by it, in spite of challenge or coaxers. It will be remembered in your favour next morning.

And of course I do not mean merely festive societies. Literary, debating, political, social, athletic, every one of them is a tool to your hands. But you must show them what a good man you are. You must throw yourself into each with energy and conviction. You will soon find yourself on the committee—possibly the secretary, or even in the presidential chair. Do not grudge labour where the return may be remote and indirect. Those are the rungs up which one climbs.

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That was how, when I had gained some sort of opening, I set to work to enlarge it. I joined this. I joined that. I pushed in every direction. I took up athletics again, much to the advantage of my health, and found that the practice benefited as well as I. My cricket form for the season has been fair, with an average of about 20 with the bat and 9 with the ball.

It must be allowed, however, that this system of sallying out for my patients and leaving my consulting-room empty might be less successful if it were not for my treasure of a housekeeper. She is a marvel of discretion, and the way in which she perjures her soul for the sake of the practice is a constant weight upon my conscience. She is a tall, thin woman, with a grave face and an impressive manner. Her standard fiction, implied rather than said (with an air as if it were so universally known that it would be absurd to put it into words), is, that I am so pressed by the needs of my enormous practice, that any one wishing to consult me must make their appointment very exactly and a long time in advance.

"Dear me, now!" she says to some applicant. "He's been hurried off again. If you'd been here half an hour ago he might have given you a minute. I never saw such a thing" (confidentially). "Between you and me I don't think he can last at it long. He's bound to break down. But come in, and I'll do all I can for you."

Then, having carefully fastened the patient up in the consulting-room, she goes to little Paul.

"Run round to the bowling green, Master Paul," says she. "You'll find the doctor there, I think. Just tell him that a patient is waiting for him."

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She seems in these interviews to inspire them with a kind of hushed feeling of awe, as if they had found their way into some holy of holies. My own actual appearance is quite an anti-climax after the introduction by Miss Williams.

Another of her devices is to make appointments with an extreme precision as to time, I being at the moment worked to death (at a cricket match).

"Let us see!" says she, looking at the slate. "He will be clear at seven minutes past eight this evening. Yes, he could just manage it then. He has no one at all from seven past to the quarter past"—and so at the appointed hour I have my patient precipitating himself into my room with the demeanour of the man who charges in for his bowl of hot soup at a railway station. If he knew that he is probably the only patient who has opened my door that evening he would not be in such a hurry—or think so much of my advice.

One curious patient has come my way who has been of great service to me. She is a stately looking widow, Turner by name, the most depressingly respectable figure, as of Mrs. Grundy's older and less frivolous sister. She lives in a tiny house, with one small servant to scale. Well, every two months or so she quite suddenly goes on a mad drink, which lasts for about a week. It ends as abruptly as it begins, but while it is on the neighbours know it. She shrieks, yells, sings, chivies the servant, and skims plates out of the window at the passers-by. Of course, it is really not funny, but pathetic and deplorable—all the same, it is hard to keep from laughing at the absurd contrast between her actions and her appearance. I was called in by accident in the first instance; but I speedily

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acquired some control over her, so that now the neighbours send for me the moment the crockery begins to come through the window. She has a fair competence, so that her little vagaries are a help to me with my rent. She has, too, a number of curious jugs, statues, and pictures, a selection of which she presents to me in the course of each of her attacks, insisting upon my carrying them away then and there; so that I stagger out of the house like one of Napoleon's generals coming out of Italy. There is a good deal of method in the old lady, however, and on her recovery she invariably sends round a porter, with a polite note to say that she would be very glad to have her pictures back again.

And now I have worked my way to the point where I can show you what I mean when I talk about fate. The medical practitioner who lives next me—Porter is his name—is a kindly sort of man, and knowing that I have had a long uphill fight, he has several times put things in my way. One day about three weeks ago he came into my consulting-room after breakfast.

“Could you come with me to a consultation?” he asked.

“With pleasure.”

“I have my carriage outside.”

He told me something of the case as we went. It was a young fellow, an only son, who had been suffering from nervous symptoms for some time, and lately from considerable pain in his head. “His people are living with a patient of mine, General Wainwright,” said Porter. “He didn't like the symptoms, and thought he would have a second opinion.”

We came to the house, a great big one, in its

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

own grounds, and had a preliminary talk with the dark-faced, white-haired Indian soldier who owns it. He was explaining the responsibility that he felt, the patient being his nephew, when a lady entered the room. "This is my sister, Mrs. La Force," said he, "the mother of the gentleman whom you are going to see."

I recognised her instantly. I had met her before and under curious circumstances. (Dr. Stark Munro here proceeds to narrate again how he had met the La Forces, having evidently forgotten that he had already done so in Letter VI.) When she was introduced I could see that she had not associated me with the young doctor in the train. I don't wonder, for I have started a beard, in the hope of making myself look a little older. She was naturally all anxiety about her son, and we went up with her (Porter and I) to have a look at him. Poor fellow! he seemed peakier and more sallow than when I had seen him last. We held our consultation, came to an agreement about the chronic nature of his complaint, and finally departed without my reminding Mrs. La Force of our previous meeting.

Well, there the matter might have ended; but about three days afterward who should be shown into my consulting-room but Mrs. La Force and her daughter! I thought the latter looked twice at me, when her mother introduced her, as if she had some recollection of my face; but she evidently could not recall where she had seen it, and I said nothing to help her. They both seemed to be much distressed in mind—indeed, the tears were brimming over from the girl's eyes, and her lip was quivering.

"We have come to you, Dr. Munro, in the

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

greatest distress," said Mrs. La Force; "we should be very glad of your advice."

"You place me in rather a difficult position, Mrs. La Force," said I. "The fact is, that I look upon you as Dr. Porter's patients, and it is a breach of etiquette upon my part to hold any communication with you except through him."

"It was he who sent us here," said she.

"Oh, that alters the matter entirely."

"He said he could do nothing to help us, and that perhaps you could."

"Pray let me know what you wish done."

She set out valorously to explain; but the effort of putting her troubles into words seemed to bring them more home to her, and she suddenly blurred over and became inarticulate. Her daughter bent toward her, and kissed her with the prettiest little spasm of love and pity.

"I will tell you about it, doctor," said she. "Poor mother is almost worn out. Fred—my brother, that is to say—is worse. He has become noisy, and will not be quiet."

"And my brother, the general," continued Mrs. La Force, "naturally did not expect this when he kindly offered us a home, and, being a nervous man, it is very trying to him. In fact, it cannot go on. He says so himself."

"But what is mother to do?" cried the girl, taking up the tale again. "No hotel or lodging-house would take us in while poor Fred is like that. And we have not the heart to send him to an asylum. Uncle will not have us any longer, and we have nowhere to go to." Her grey eyes tried to look brave, but her mouth would go down at the corners.

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I rose and walked up and down the room, trying to think it all out.

"What I wanted to ask you," said Mrs. La Force, "was whether perhaps you knew some doctor or some private establishment which took in such cases—so that we could see Fred every day or so. The only thing is that he must be taken at once, for really my brother has reached the end of his patience."

I rang the bell for my housekeeper.

"Miss Williams," said I, "do you think we can furnish a bedroom by to-night, so as to take in a gentleman who is ill?"

Never have I so admired that wonderful woman's self-command.

"Why easily, sir, if the patients will only let me alone. But with that bell going thirty times an hour, it's hard to say what you are going to do."

This with her funny manner set the ladies laughing, and the whole business seemed lighter and easier. I promised to have the room ready by eight o'clock. Mrs. La Force arranged to bring her son round at that hour, and both ladies thanked me a very great deal more than I deserved; for after all it was a business matter, and a resident patient was the very thing that I needed. I was able to assure Mrs. La Force that I had had a similar case under my charge before—meaning, of course, poor "Jimmy," the son of Lord Saltire. Miss Williams escorted them to the door, and took occasion to whisper to them that it was wonderful how I got through with it, and that I was "within sight of my carriage."

It was a short notice, but we got everything ready by the hour. Carpet, bed, suite, curtains—

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

all came together, and were fixed in their places by the united efforts of Miss Williams, Paul, and myself. Sharp at eight a cab arrived, and Fred was conducted by me into his bedroom. The moment I looked at him I could see that he was much worse than when I saw him with Dr. Porter. The chronic brain trouble had taken a sudden acute turn. His eyes were wild, his cheeks flushed, his lips drawn slightly away from his teeth. His temperature was 102°, and he muttered to himself continually, and paid no attention to my questions. It was evident to me at a glance that the responsibility which I had taken upon myself was to be no light one.

However, we could but do our best. I undressed him and got him safely to bed, while Miss Williams prepared some arrowroot for his supper. He would eat nothing, however, but seemed more disposed to doze, so having seen him settle down we left him. His room was the one next to mine, and as the wall was thin, I could hear the least movement. Two or three times he muttered and groaned, but finally he became quiet, and I was able to drop to sleep.

At three in the morning, I was awakened by a dreadful crash. Bounding out of bed I rushed into the other room. Poor Fred was standing in his long gown, a pathetic little figure in the grey light of the dawning day. He had pulled over his washing-stand (with what object only his bemuddled mind could say), and the whole place was a morass of water with islands of broken crockery. I picked him up and put him back into his bed again—his body glowing through his night-dress, and his eyes staring wildly about him. It was evidently impossible to leave him, and so I spent the rest of the



## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

night nodding and shivering in the armchair. No, it was certainly not a sinecure that I had undertaken.

In the morning I went round to Mrs. La Force, and gave her a bulletin. Her brother had recovered his serenity now that the patient had left. He had the Victoria Cross it seems, and was one of the desperate little garrison who held Lucknow in that hell-whirl of a mutiny. And now the sudden opening of a door sets him shaking, and a dropped tongs gives him palpitations. Are we not the strangest kind of beings?

Fred was a little better during the day, and even seemed in a dull sort of way to recognise his sister, who brought him flowers in the afternoon. Toward evening his temperature sank to  $101.5^{\circ}$ , and he fell into a kind of stupor. As it happened, Dr. Porter came in about supper-time, and I asked him if he would step up and have a look at my patient. He did so, and we found him dozing peacefully. You would hardly think that that small incident may have been one of the most momentous in my life. It was the merest chance in the world that Porter went up at all.

Fred was taking medicine with a little chloral in it at this time. I gave him his usual dose last thing at night; and then, as he seemed to be sleeping peacefully, I went to my own room for the rest which I badly needed. I did not wake until eight in the morning, when I was roused by the jingling of a spoon in a saucer, and the step of Miss Williams passing my door. She was taking him the arrowroot which I had ordered over-night. I heard her open the door, and the next moment my heart sprang into my mouth as she gave a hoarse scream, and her cup and saucer crashed upon the floor. An

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

instant later she had burst into my room, with her face convulsed with terror.

"My God!" she cried, "he's gone!"

I caught up my dressing gown and rushed into the next room.

Poor little Fred was stretched sideways across his bed, quite dead. He looked as if he had been rising and had fallen backward. His face was so peaceful and smiling that I could hardly have recognised the worried, fever-worn features of yesterday. There is great promise, I think, on the faces of the dead. They say it is but the *post-mortem* relaxation of the muscles, but it is one of the points on which I should like to see science wrong.

Miss Williams and I stood for five minutes without a word, hushed by the presence of that supreme fact. Then we laid him straight, and drew the sheet over him. She knelt down and prayed and sobbed, while I sat on the bed, with the cold hand in mine. Then my heart turned to lead as I remembered that it lay for me to break the news to the mother.

However, she took it most admirably. They were all three at breakfast when I came round, the general, Mrs. La Force, and the daughter. Somehow they seemed to know all that I had to say at the very sight of me; and in their womanly unselfishness their sympathy was all for me, for the shock I had suffered, and the disturbance of my household. I found myself turned from the consoler into the consoled. For an hour or more we talked it over, I explaining what I hope needed no explanation, that as the poor boy could not tell me his symptoms it was hard for me to know how immediate was his danger. There can be no doubt

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

that the fall of temperature and the quietness which both Porter and I had looked upon as a hopeful sign, were really the beginning to the end.

Mrs. La Force asked me to see to everything, the formalities, register, and funeral. It was on a Wednesday, and we thought it best that the burial should be on the Friday. Back I hurried, therefore, not knowing what to do first, and found old Whitehall waiting for me in my consulting-room, looking very jaunty with a camellia in his button-hole. Not an organ in its right place, and a camellia in his button-hole!

Between ourselves, I was sorry to see him, for I was in no humour for his company; but he had heard all about it from Miss Williams, and had come to stop. Only then did I fully realise how much of the kindly, delicate-minded gentleman remained behind that veil of profanity and obscenity which he so often held before him.

"I'll trot along with you, Dr. Munro, sir. A man's none the worse for a companion at such times. I'll not open my mouth unless you wish it, sir; but I am an idle man, and would take it as a kindness if you would let me come round with you."

Round he came, and very helpful he was. He seemed to know all about the procedure—"Buried two wives, Dr. Munro, sir!" I signed the certificate myself, conveyed it to the registrar, got the order for burial, took it round to the parish clerk, arranged an hour, then off to the undertaker's, and back to my practice. It was a kind of nightmare morning to look back upon, relieved only by the figure of my old Bohemian, with his pea jacket, his blackthorn, his puffy, crinkly face, and his camellia.

To make a long story short, then, the funeral

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

came off as arranged, General Wainwright, Whitehall, and I being the sole mourners. The captain had never seen poor Fred in the flesh; but he "liked to be in at the finish, sir," and so he gave me his company. It was at eight in the morning, and it was ten before we found ourselves at Oakley Villas. A burly man with bushy whiskers was waiting for us at the door.

"Are you Dr. Munro, sir?" he asked.

"I am."

"I am a detective from the local office. I was ordered to inquire into the death of the young man in your house lately."

Here was a thunderbolt! If looking upset is a sign of guilt, I must have stood confessed as a villain. It was so absolutely unexpected. I hope, however, that I had command of myself instantly.

"Pray step in!" said I. "Any information I can give you is entirely at your service. Have you any objection to my friend Captain Whitehall being present?"

"Not in the least." So in we both went, taking this bird of ill-omen.

He was, however, a man of tact and with a pleasant manner.

"Of course, Dr. Munro," said he, "you are much too well known in the town for any one to take this matter seriously. But the fact is that we had an anonymous letter this morning saying that the young man had died yesterday and was to be buried at an unusual hour to-day, and that the circumstances were suspicious."

"He died the day before yesterday. He was buried at eight to-day," I explained; and then I told him the whole story from the beginning. He listened attentively, and took a note or two.

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

"Who signed the certificate?" he asked.

"I did," said I.

He raised his eyebrows slightly. "There is really no one to check your statement then?" said he.

"Oh yes, Dr. Porter saw him the night before he died. He knew all about the case."

The detective shut his note-book with a snap. "That is final, Dr. Munro," said he. "Of course I must see Dr. Porter as a matter of form, but if his opinion agrees with yours I can only apologise to you for this intrusion."

"And there is one more thing, Mr. Detective, sir," said Whitehall explosively. "I'm not a rich man, sir, only the — half-pay skipper of an armed transport; but by —, sir, I'd give you this hat full of dollars to know the name of the — rascal who wrote that anonymous letter, sir. By —, sir, you'd have a real case to look after then." And he waved his blackthorn ferociously.

So the wretched business ended, Harold. But on what trifling chances do our fortunes depend! If Porter had not seen him that night, it is more than likely that there would have been an exhumation. And then,—well, there would be chloral in the body; some money interests *did* depend upon the death of the lad—a sharp lawyer might have made much of the case. Anyway, the first breath of suspicion would have blown my little rising practice to the wind. What awful things lurk at the corners of Life's highway, ready to pounce upon us as we pass!

And so you really are going a-voyaging! Well, I won't write again until I hear that you are back from the Islands, and then I hope to have something a little more cheery to talk about.

## XVI

1 OAKLEY VILLAS,  
BIRCHESPOOL, 4th November, 1884.

I FACE my study window as I write, Harold. Slate-coloured clouds with ragged edges are drifting slowly overhead. Between them one has a glimpse of higher clouds of a lighter grey. I can hear the gentle swish of the rain striking a clearer note on the gravel path and a duller among the leaves. Sometimes it falls straight and heavy, till the air is full of the delicate grey shading, and for half a foot above the ground there is a haze from the rebound of a million tiny globules. Then without any change in the clouds it eases off again. Pools line my walk, and lie thick upon the roadway, their surface pocked by the falling drops. As I sit I can smell the heavy perfume of the wet earth, and the laurel bushes gleam where the light strikes sideways upon them. The gate outside shines above as though it were new varnished, and along the lower edge of the upper bar there hangs a fringe of great clear drops.

That is the best that November can do for us in our dripping little island. You, I suppose, sitting among the dying glories of an American fall, think that this must needs be depressing. Don't make any mistake about that, my dear boy. You may take the States, from Detroit to the Gulf, and you won't find a happier man than this one. What do you suppose I've got at this moment in my consulting-room? A bureau? A bookcase? No, I

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

know you've guessed my secret already. She is sitting in my big armchair; and she is the best, the kindest, the sweetest little woman in England.

Yes, I've been married six months now—the almanac says months, though I should have thought weeks. I should, of course, have sent cake and cards, but had an idea that you were not home from the Islands yet. It is a good year since I wrote to you; but when you give an amorphous address of that sort, what can you expect? I've thought of you, and talked of you often enough.

Well, I daresay, with the acumen of an old married man, you have guessed who the lady is as well. We surely know by some nameless instinct more about our futures than we think we know. I can remember, for example, that years ago the name of Bradfield used to strike with a causeless familiarity upon my ear; and since then, as you know, the course of my life has flowed through it. And so when I first saw Winnie La Force in the railway carriage, before I had spoken to her or knew her name, I felt an inexplicable sympathy for and interest in her. Have you had no experience of the sort in your life? Or was it merely that she was obviously gentle and retiring, and so made a silent claim upon all that was helpful and manly in me? At any rate, I was conscious of it; and again and again every time that I met her. How good is that saying of some Russian writer that he who loves one woman knows more of the whole sex than he who has had passing relations with a thousand! I thought I knew something of women. I suppose every medical student does. But now I can see that I really knew nothing. My knowledge was all external. I did not know the woman soul, that

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crowning gift of Providence to man, which, if we do not ourselves degrade it, will set an edge to all that is good in us. I did not know how the love of a woman will tinge a man's whole life and every action with unselfishness. I did not know how easy it is to be noble when some one else takes it for granted that one will be so; or how wide and interesting life becomes when viewed by four eyes instead of two. I had much to learn, you see; but I think I have learned it.

It was natural that the death of poor Fred La Force should make me intimate with the family. It was really that cold hand which I grasped that morning as I sat by his bed which drew me toward my happiness. I visited them frequently, and we often went little excursions together. Then my dear mother came down to stay with me for a spell, and turned Miss Williams grey by looking for dust in all sorts of improbable corners; or advancing with a terrible silence, a broom in one hand and a shovel in the other, to the attack of a spider's web which she had marked down in the beer cellar. Her presence enabled me to return some of the hospitality which I had received from the La Forces, and brought us still nearer together.

I had never yet reminded them of our previous meeting. One evening, however, the talk turned upon clairvoyance, and Mrs. La Force was expressing the utmost disbelief in it. I borrowed her ring, and holding it to my forehead, I pretended to be peering into her past.

"I see you in a railway carriage," said I. "You are wearing a red feather in your bonnet. Miss La Force is dressed in something dark. There is a young man there. He is rude enough to address



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your daughter as Winnie before he has ever been  
——”

“Oh, mother,” she cried, “of course it is he! The face haunted me, and I could not think where we had met it.”

Well, there are some things that we don't talk about to another man, even when we know each other as well as I know you. Why should we, when that which is most engrossing to us consists in those gradual shades of advance from friendship to intimacy, and from intimacy to something more sacred still, which can scarcely be written at all, far less made interesting to another? The time came at last when they were to leave Birchespool, and my mother and I went round the night before to say good-bye. Winnie and I were thrown together for an instant.

“When will you come back to Birchespool?” I asked.

“Mother does not know.”

“Will you come soon, and be my wife?”

I had been turning over in my head all the evening how prettily I could lead up to it, and how neatly I could say it—and behold the melancholy result! Well, perhaps the feeling of my heart managed to make itself clear even through those bald words. There was but one to judge, and she was of that opinion.

I was so lost in my own thoughts that I walked as far as Oakley Villas with my mother before I opened my mouth. “Mam,” said I at last, “I have proposed to Winnie La Force, and she has accepted me.”

“My boy,” said she, “you are a true Packenham.” And so I knew that my mother's approval had

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

reached the point of enthusiasm. It was not for days—not until I expressed a preference for dust under the bookcase with quiet, against purity and ructions—that the dear old lady perceived traces of the Munros.

The time originally fixed for the wedding was six months after this; but we gradually whittled it down to five and to four. My income had risen to about two hundred and seventy pounds at the time; and Winnie had agreed, with a somewhat enigmatical smile, that we could manage very well on that—the more so as marriage sends a doctor's income up. The reason of her smile became more apparent when a few weeks before that date I received a most portentous blue document in which "We, Brown & Woodhouse, the solicitors for the herein and hereafter mentioned Winifred La Force, do hereby"—state a surprising number of things, and use some remarkably bad English. The meaning of it, when all the "whereas's and aforesaid's" were picked out, was, that Winnie had about a hundred a year of her own. It could not make me love her a shade better than I did; but at the same time I won't be so absurd as to say that I was not glad, or to deny that it made our marriage much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Poor Whitehall came in on the morning of the ceremony. He was staggering under the weight of a fine Japanese cabinet which he had carried round from his lodgings. I had asked him to come to the church, and the old gentleman was resplendent in a white waistcoat and a silk tie. Between ourselves, I had been just a little uneasy lest his excitement should upset him, as in the case of the dinner; but nothing could be more exem-

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

plary than his conduct and appearance. I had introduced him to Winnie some days before.

"You'll forgive me for saying, Dr. Munro, sir, that you are a —— lucky fellow," said he. "You've put your hand in the bag, sir, and taken out the eel first time, as any one with half an eye can see. Now, I've had three dips, and landed a snake every dip. If I'd had a good woman at my side, Dr. Munro, sir, I might not be the broken half-pay skipper of an armed transport to-day."

"I thought you had been twice married, captain."

"Three times, sir. I buried two. The other lives at Brussels. Well, I'll be at the church, Dr. Munro, sir; and you may lay that there is no one there who wishes you better than I do."

And yet there were many there who wished me well. My patients had all got wind of it; and they assembled by the pewful, looking distressingly healthy. My neighbour, Dr. Porter, was there also to lend me his support, and old General Wainwright gave Winnie away. My mother, Mrs. La Force, and Miss Williams were all in the front pew; and away at the back of the church I caught a glimpse of the forked beard and crinkly face of Whitehall, and beside him the wounded lieutenant, the man who ran away with the cook, and quite a line of the strange Bohemians who followed his fortunes. Then when the words were said, and man's form had tried to sanctify that which was already divine, we walked amid the pealings of the "Wedding March" into the vestry, where my dear mother relieved the tension of the situation by signing the register in the wrong place, so that to all appearance it was she who had just married the

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

clergyman. And then amid congratulations and kindly faces, we were together, her hand on my forearm, upon the steps of the church, and saw the familiar road stretching before us. But it was not that road which lay before my eyes, but rather the path of our lives;—that broader path on which our feet were now planted, so pleasant to tread, and yet with its course so shrouded in the mist. Was it long, or was it short? Was it uphill, or was it down? For her, at least, it should be smooth, if a man's love could make it so.

We were away for several weeks in the Isle of Man, and then came back to Oakley Villas, where Miss Williams was awaiting us in a house in which even my mother could have found no dust, and with a series of cheering legends as to the crowds of patients who had blocked the street in my absence. There really was a marked increase in my practice; and for the last six months or so, without being actually busy, I have always had enough to occupy me. My people are poor, and I have to work hard for a small fee; but I still study and attend the local hospital, and keep my knowledge up to date, so as to be ready for my opening when it comes. There are times when I chafe that I may not play a part upon some larger stage than this; but my happiness is complete, and if fate has no further use for me, I am content now from my heart to live and to die where I am.

You will wonder, perhaps, how we get on—my wife and I—in the matter of religion. Well, we both go our own ways. Why should I proselytise? I would not for the sake of abstract truth take away her child-like faith which serves to make life easier and brighter to her. I have made my-

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

self ill-understood by you in these discursive letters if you have read in them any bitterness against the orthodox creeds. Far from saying that they are all false, it would express my position better to say that they are all true. Providence would not have used them were they not the best available tools, and in that sense divine. That they are final I deny. A simpler and more universal creed will take their place, when the mind of man is ready for it; and I believe it will be a creed founded upon those lines of absolute and provable truth which I have indicated. But the old creeds are still the best suited to certain minds, and to certain ages. If they are good enough for Providence to use, they are good enough for us to endure. We have but to wait upon the survival of the truest. If I have seemed to say anything aggressive against them, it was directed at those who wish to limit the Almighty's favour to their own little clique, or who wish to build a Chinese wall round religion, with no assimilation of fresh truths, and no hope of expansion in the future. It is with these that the pioneers of progress can hold no truce. As for my wife, I would as soon think of breaking in upon her innocent prayers, as she would of carrying off the works of philosophy from my study table. She is not narrow in her views; but if one could stand upon the very topmost pinnacle of broad-mindedness, one would doubtless see from it that even the narrow have their mission. ✓

About a year ago I had news of Cullingworth from Smeaton, who was in the same football team at college, and who had called when he was passing through Bradfield. His report was not a very favourable one. The practice had declined consid-

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

erably. People had no doubt accustomed themselves to his eccentricities, and these had ceased to impress them. Again, there had been one or two coroner's inquests, which had spread the impression that he had been rash in the use of powerful drugs. If the coroner could have seen the hundreds of cures which Cullingworth had effected by that same rashness he would have been less confident with his censures. But, as you can understand, C.'s rival medical men were not disposed to cover him in any way. He had never had much consideration for them.

Besides this decline in his practice, I was sorry to hear that Cullingworth had shown renewed signs of that curious vein of suspicion which had always seemed to me to be the most insane of all his traits. His whole frame of mind toward me had been an example of it, but as far back as I can remember it had been a characteristic. Even in those early days when they lived in four little rooms above a grocer's shop, I recollect that he insisted upon gumming up every chink of one bedroom for fear of some imaginary infection. He was haunted, too, with a perpetual dread of eavesdroppers, which used to make him fly at the door and fling it open in the middle of his conversation, pouncing out into the passage with the idea of catching somebody in the act. Once it was the maid with the tea tray that he caught, I remember; and I can see her astonished face now, with an aureole of flying cups and lumps of sugar.

Smeaton tells me that this has now taken the form of imagining that some one is conspiring to poison him with copper, against which he takes the most extravagant precautions. It is the strangest

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sight, he says, to see Cullingworth at his meals ; for he sits with an elaborate chemical apparatus and numerous retorts and bottles at his elbow, with which he tests samples of every course. I could not help laughing at Smeaton's description, and yet it was a laugh with a groan underlying it. Of all ruins, that of a fine man is the saddest.

I never thought I should have seen Cullingworth again, but fate has brought us together. I have always had a kindly feeling for him, though I feel that he used me atrociously. Often I have wondered whether, if I were placed before him, I should take him by the throat or by the hand. You will be interested to hear what actually occurred.

One day, just a week or so back, I was starting on my round, when a boy arrived with a note. It fairly took my breath away when I saw the familiar writing, and realised that Cullingworth was in Birchespool. I called Winnie, and we read it together.

"Dear Munro," it said, "James is in lodgings here for a few days. We are on the point of leaving England. He would be glad, for the sake of old times, to have a chat with you before he goes.

"Yours faithfully,

"HETTY CULLINGWORTH."

The writing was his and the style of address, so that it was evidently one of those queer little bits of transparent cunning which were characteristic of him, to make it come from his wife, that he might not lay himself open to a direct rebuff. The address, curiously enough, was that very Cadogan

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Terrace at which I had lodged, but two doors higher up.

Well, I was averse from going myself, but Winnie was all for peace and forgiveness. Women who claim nothing invariably get everything, and so my gentle little wife always carries her point. Half an hour later I was in Cadogan Terrace with very mixed feelings, but the kindlier ones at the top. I tried to think that Cullingworth's treatment of me had been pathological—the result of a diseased brain. If a delirious man had struck me, I should not have been angry with him. That must be my way of looking at it.

If Cullingworth still bore any resentment, he concealed it most admirably. But then I knew by experience that that genial loud-voiced John-Bull manner of his *could* conceal many things. His wife was more open; and I could read in her tightened lips and cold grey eyes, that she at least stood fast to the old quarrel. Cullingworth was little changed, and seemed to be as sanguine and as full of spirits as ever.

"Sound as a trout, my boy!" he cried, drumming on his chest with his hands. "Played for the London Scottish in their opening match last week, and was on the ball from whistle to whistle. Not so quick on a sprint—you find that yourself, Munro, eh, what?—but a good hard-working bullocky forward. Last match I shall have for many a day, for I am off to South America next week."

"You have given up Bradfield altogether then?"

"Too provincial, my boy! What's the good of a village practice with a miserable three thousand or so a year for a man that wants room to spread? My head was sticking out at one end of Bradfield



## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

and my feet at the other. Why, there wasn't room for Hetty in the place, let alone me! I've taken to the eye, my boy. There's a fortune in the eye. A man grudges a half-crown to cure his chest or his throat, but he'd spend his last dollar over his eye. There's money in ears, but the eye is a gold mine."

"What!" said I, "in South America?"

"Just exactly in South America," he cried, pacing with his quick little steps up and down the dingy room. "Look here, laddie! There's a great continent from the equator to the icebergs, and not a man in it who could correct an astigmatism. What do they know of modern eye-surgery and refraction? Why, dammy, they don't know much about it in the provinces of England yet, let alone Brazil. Man, if you could only see it, there's a fringe of squinting millionaires sitting ten deep round the whole continent with their money in their hands waiting for an oculist. Eh, Munro, what? By Crums, I'll come back and I'll buy Bradfield, and I'll give it away as a tip to a waiter."

"You propose to settle in some large city, then?"

"City! What use would a city be to me? I'm there to squeeze the continent. I work a town at a time. I send on an agent to the next to say that I am coming. 'Here's the chance of a lifetime,' says he, 'no need to go back to Europe. Here's Europe come to you. Squints, cataracts, iritis, refractions, what you like; here's the great Signor Cullingworth, right up to date and ready for anything!' In they come of course, droves of them, and then I arrive and take the money. Here's my luggage!" he pointed to two great hampers in the

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

corner of the room. "Those are glasses, my boy, concave and convex, hundreds of them. I test an eye, fit him on the spot, and send him away shouting. Then I load up a steamer and come home, unless I elect to buy one of their little States and run it."

Of course it sounded absurd as he put it; but I could soon see that he had worked out his details, and that there was a very practical side to his visions.

"I work Bahia," said he. "My agent prepares Pernambuco. When Bahia is squeezed dry I move on to Pernambuco, and the agent ships to Monte Video. So we work our way round with a trail of spectacles behind us. It'll go like clock-work."

"You will need to speak Spanish," said I.

"Tut, it does not take any Spanish to stick a knife into a man's eye. All I shall want to know is, 'Money down—no credit.' That's Spanish enough for me."

We had a long and interesting talk about all that had happened to both of us, without, however, any allusion to our past quarrel. He would not admit that he had left Bradfield on account of a falling-off in his practice, or for any reason except that he found the place too small. His spring-screen invention had, he said, been favourably reported upon by one of the first private shipbuilding firms on the Clyde, and there was every probability of their adopting it.

"As to the magnet," said he, "I'm very sorry for my country, but there is no more command of the seas for her. I'll have to let the thing go to the Germans. It's not my fault. They must not

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

blame me when the smash comes. I put the thing before the Admiralty, and I could have made a board school understand it in half the time. Such letters, Munro! Colney Hatch on blue paper. When the war comes, and I show those letters, somebody will be hanged. Questions about this—questions about that. At last they asked me what I proposed to fasten my magnet to. I answered to any solid impenetrable object, such as the head of an Admiralty official. Well, that broke the whole thing up. They wrote with their compliments, and they were returning my apparatus. I wrote with my compliments, and they might go to the devil. And so ends a great historical incident, Munro—eh, what?”

We parted very good friends, but with reservations, I fancy, on both sides. His last advice to me was to clear out of Birchespool.

“You can do better—you can do better, laddie!” said he. “Look round the whole world, and when you see a little round hole, jump in feet foremost. There’s a lot of ’em about if a man keeps himself ready.”

So those were the last words of Cullingworth, and the last that I may ever see of him also, for he starts almost immediately upon his strange venture. He must succeed. He is a man whom nothing could hold down. I wish him luck, and have a kindly feeling toward him, and yet I distrust him from the bottom of my heart, and shall be just as pleased to know that the Atlantic rolls between us.

Well, my dear Harold, a happy and tranquil, if not very ambitious existence stretches before us. We are both in our twenty-fifth year, and I sup-

## THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS

pose that without presumption we can reckon that thirty-five more years lie in front of us. I can foresee the gradually increasing routine of work, the wider circle of friends, the identification with this or that local movement, with perhaps a seat on the Bench, or at least in the Municipal Council in my later years. It's not a very startling programme, is it? But it lies to my hand, and I see no other. I should dearly love that the world should be ever so little better for my presence. Even on this small stage we have our two sides, and something might be done by throwing all one's weight on the scale of breadth, tolerance, charity, temperance, peace, and kindliness to man and beast. We can't all strike very big blows, and even the little ones count for something.

So good-bye, my dear boy, and remember that when you come to England our home would be the brighter for your presence. In any case, now that I have your address, I shall write again in a very few weeks. My kindest regards to Mrs. Swanborough.

Yours ever,  
J. STARK MUNRO.

THE END.

**ROUND THE RED LAMP**  
**BEING FACTS AND FANCIES OF**  
**MEDICAL LIFE**



## PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

[Being an extract from a long and animated correspondence  
with a friend in America.]

“I QUITE recognise the force of your objection that an invalid, or a woman in weak health, would get no good from stories which attempt to treat some features of medical life with a certain amount of realism. If you deal with this life at all, however, and if you are anxious to make your doctors something more than the usual marionettes of fiction, it is quite essential that you should paint the darker side, since it is that which is principally presented to the Surgeon or the Physician. He sees many beautiful things, it is true; fortitude and heroism, self-sacrifice and love, but they are all called forth (as our nobler qualities are always called forth) by bitter sorrow and trial. One cannot write of medical life and be merry over it.

“Then why write of it, you may ask? If a subject be painful, why treat it at all? I answer that it is the province of fiction to treat painful things as well as cheerful ones. The story which wiles away a weary hour fulfils an obviously good purpose, but not more so, I hold, than that which helps to emphasise the graver side of life. A tale which may startle the reader out of his usual grooves of thought, and shock him into seriousness, plays the part of the alterative and tonic in medicine, bitter to the taste, but bracing in its result. There

## PREFACE

are a few stories in this little collection which might have such an effect, and I have so far shared in your feeling that I have reserved them from serial publication. In book form the reader can see that they are medical stories, and can, if she or he be so minded, avoid them.—Yours very truly,

“A. CONAN DOYLE.”



## PREFACE TO THE AUTHOR'S EDITION

THESE stories have all some bearing, more or less direct, upon medical men and medical subjects. In looking over them I am struck by the fact that within the covers of one book I have used two entirely different methods of literary treatment. Five of the stories, "His First Operation," "The Third Generation," "The Curse of Eve," "A Medical Document," and "The Surgeon Talks," are strictly—some would say too strictly—realistic. The others are all tinged with romance. Holding, as I do, that the ultimate object of all fiction is interest, and that it is immaterial by what method or device you gain your end, so long as you do gain it, I have not concerned myself about this variety of treatment, and I have hoped that it might even have a good effect, since the lighter papers may relieve the intolerable grimness of medical truth.

One of the short sketches, "A Straggler of '15," has had the good fortune to furnish Sir Henry Irving with the materials for his "Story of Waterloo," in which a great artist has shown how much may be made of the slightest of studies.

A. CONAN DOYLE.

UNDERSHAW, HINDHEAD, 1901.



# ROUND THE RED LAMP

## BEHIND THE TIMES

My first interview with Dr. James Winter was under dramatic circumstances. It occurred at two in the morning in the bedroom of an old country house. I kicked him twice on the white waistcoat and knocked off his gold spectacles, while he, with the aid of a female accomplice, stifled my angry cries in a flannel petticoat and thrust me into a warm bath. I am told that one of my parents, who happened to be present, remarked in a whisper that there was nothing the matter with my lungs. I cannot recall how Dr. Winter looked at the time, for I had other things to think of, but his description of my own appearance is far from flattering. A fluffy head, a body like trussed goose, very bandy legs, and feet with the soles turned inward—those are the main items which he can remember.

From this time onward the epochs of my life were the periodical assaults which Dr. Winter made upon me. He vaccinated me, he cut me for an abscess, he blistered me for mumps. It was a world of peace, and he the one dark cloud that threatened. But at last there came a time of real illness—a time when I lay for months together inside my wicker-work basket bed, and then it was that I learned that that hard face could relax, that those country-

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made, creaking boots could steal very gently to a bedside, and that that rough voice could thin into a whisper when it spoke to a sick child.

And now the child is himself a medical man, and yet Dr. Winter is the same as ever. I can see no change since first I can remember him, save that perhaps the brindled hair is a trifle whiter, and the huge shoulders a little more bowed. He is a very tall man, though he loses a couple of inches from his stoop. That big back of his has curved itself over sick beds until it has set in that shape. His face is of a walnut brown, and tells of long winter drives over bleak country roads with the wind and the rain in his teeth. It looks smooth at a little distance, but as you approach him you see that it is shot with innumerable fine wrinkles, like a last year's apple. They are hardly to be seen when he is in repose, but when he laughs his face breaks like a starred glass, and you realise then that, though he looks old, he must be older than he looks.

How old that is I could never discover. I have often tried to find out, and have struck his stream as high up as George the Fourth and even of the Regency, but without ever getting quite to the source. His mind must have been open to impressions very early, but it must also have closed early, for the politics of the day have little interest for him, while he is fiercely excited about questions which are entirely prehistoric. He shakes his head when he speaks of the first Reform Bill and expresses grave doubts as to its wisdom, and I have heard him, when he was warmed by a glass of wine, say bitter things about Robert Peel and his abandoning of the Corn Laws. The death of that statesman brought the history of England to a definite close,

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and Dr. Winter refers to everything which had happened since then as to an insignificant anticlimax.

But it was only when I had myself become a medical man that I was able to appreciate how entirely he is a survival of a past generation. He had learned his medicine under that obsolete and forgotten system by which a youth was apprenticed to a surgeon, in the days when the study of anatomy was often approached through a violated grave. His views upon his own profession are even more reactionary than his politics. Fifty years have brought him little and deprived him of less. Vaccination was well within the teaching of his youth, though I think he has a secret preference for inoculation. Bleeding he would practise freely but for public opinion. Chloroform he regards as a dangerous innovation, and he always clicks with his tongue when it is mentioned. He has even been known to say vain things about Laennec, and to refer to the stethoscope as "a newfangled French toy." He carries one in his hat out of deference to the expectations of his patients; but he is very hard of hearing, so that it makes little difference whether he uses it or not.

He always reads, as a duty, his weekly medical paper, so that he has a general idea as to the advance of modern science. He persists in looking upon it, however, as a huge and rather ludicrous experiment. The germ theory of disease set him chuckling for a long time, and his favourite joke in the sick-room was to say, "Shut the door, or the germs will be getting in." As to the Darwinian theory, it struck him as being the crowning joke of the century. "The children in the nursery and

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the ancestors in the stable," he would cry, and laugh the tears out of his eyes.

He is so very much behind the day that occasionally, as things move round in their usual circle, he finds himself, to his own bewilderment, in the front of the fashion. Dietetic treatment, for example, had been much in vogue in his youth, and he has more practical knowledge of it than anyone whom I have met. Massage, too, was familiar to him when it was new to our generation. He had been trained also at a time when instruments were in a rudimentary state and when men learned to trust more to their own fingers. He has a model surgical hand, muscular in the palm, tapering in the fingers, "with an eye at the end of each."

We made him President of our Branch of the British Medical Association, but he resigned after the first meeting. "The young men are too much for me," he said. "I don't understand what they are talking about." Yet his patients do very well. He has the healing touch—that magnetic thing which defies explanation or analysis, but which is a very evident fact none the less. His mere presence leaves the patient with more hopefulness and vitality. The sight of disease affects him as dust does a careful housewife. It makes him angry and impatient. "Tut, tut, this will never do!" he cries, as he takes over a new case. He would shoo death out of the room as though he were an intrusive hen. But when the intruder refuses to be dislodged, when the blood moves more slowly and the eyes grow dimmer, then it is that Dr. Winter is of more avail than all the drugs in his surgery. Dying folk cling to his hand as if

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the presence of his bulk and vigour gives them more courage to face the change; and that kindly, wind-beaten face has been the last earthly impression which many a sufferer has carried into the unknown.

When Dr. Patterson and I, both of us young, energetic and up-to-date, settled in the district, we were most cordially received by the old doctor, who would have been only too happy to be relieved of some of his patients. The patients themselves, however, followed their own inclinations, which is a reprehensible way that patients have, so that we remained neglected with our modern instruments and our latest alkaloids, while he was serving out senna and calomel to all the countryside. We both of us loved the old fellow, but at the same time, in the privacy of our own intimate conversations, we could not help commenting upon this deplorable lack of judgment.

"It is all very well for the poorer people," said Patterson, "but after all the educated classes have a right to expect that their medical man will know the difference between a mitral murmur and a bronchitic rale. It's the judicial frame of mind, not the sympathetic, which is the essential one."

I thoroughly agreed with Patterson in what he said. It happened, however, that very shortly afterward the epidemic of influenza broke out, and we were all worked to death. One morning I met Patterson on my round, and found him looking rather pale and fagged out. He made the same remark about me. I was in fact feeling far from well, and I lay upon the sofa all afternoon with a splitting headache and pains in every joint. As evening closed in I could no longer disguise the

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fact that the scourge was upon me, and I felt that I should have medical advice without delay. It was of Patterson naturally that I thought, but somehow the idea of him had suddenly become repugnant to me. I thought of his cold, critical attitude, of his endless questions, of his tests and his tappings. I wanted something more soothing—something more genial.

“Mrs. Hudson,” said I to my housekeeper, “would you kindly run along to old Dr. Winter and tell him that I should be obliged to him if he would step round?”

She was back with an answer presently.

“Dr. Winter will come round in an hour or so, sir, but he has just been called in to attend Dr. Patterson.”



## HIS FIRST OPERATION

It was the first day of a winter session, and the third year's man was walking with the first year's man. Twelve o'clock was just booming out from the Tron Church.

"Let me see," said the third year's man, "you have never seen an operation?"

"Never."

"Then this way, please. This is Rutherford's historic bar. A glass of sherry, please, for this gentleman. You are rather sensitive, are you not?"

"My nerves are not very strong, I am afraid."

"Hum! Another glass of sherry for this gentleman. We are going to an operation now, you know."

The novice squared his shoulders and made a gallant attempt to look unconcerned.

"Nothing very bad—eh?"

"Well, yes—pretty bad."

"An—an amputation?"

"No, it's a bigger affair than that."

"I think—I think they must be expecting me at home."

"There's no sense in funkng. If you don't go to-day you must to-morrow. Better get it over at once. Feel pretty fit?"

"Oh, yes, all right."

The smile was not a success.

"One more glass of sherry, then. Now come on or we shall be late. I want you to be well in front."

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"Surely that is not necessary."

"Oh, it is far better. What a drove of students! There are plenty of new men among them. You can tell them easily enough, can't you? If they were going down to be operated upon themselves they could not look whiter."

"I don't think I should look as white."

"Well, I was just the same myself. But the feeling soon wears off. You see a fellow with a face like plaster, and before the week is out he is eating his lunch in the dissecting rooms. I'll tell you all about the case when we get to the theatre."

The students were pouring down the sloping street which led to the infirmary—each with his little sheaf of note-books in his hand. There were pale, frightened lads, fresh from the High Schools, and callous old chronics, whose generation had passed on and left them. They swept in an unbroken, tumultuous stream from the University gate to the hospital. The figures and gait of the men were young, but there was little youth in most of their faces. Some looked as if they ate too little—a few as if they drank too much. Tall and short, tweed coated and black, round-shouldered, bespectacled and slim, they crowded with clatter of feet and rattle of sticks through the hospital gate. Now and again they thickened into two lines as the carriage of a surgeon of the staff rolled over the cobblestones between.

"There's going to be a crowd at Archer's," whispered the senior man with suppressed excitement. "It is grand to see him at work. I've seen him jab all round the aorta until it made me jumpy to watch him. This way, and mind the whitewash."

They passed under an archway and down a

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long, stone-flagged corridor with drab-coloured doors on either side, each marked with a number. Some of them were ajar, and the novice glanced into them with tingling nerves. He was reassured to catch a glimpse of cheery fires, lines of white-counterpaned beds and a profusion of coloured texts upon the wall. The corridor opened upon a small hall with a fringe of poorly-clad people seated all round upon benches. A young man with a pair of scissors stuck, like a flower, in his button-hole, and a note-book in his hand, was passing from one to the other, whispering and writing.

"Anything good?" asked the third year's man.

"You should have been here yesterday," said the out-patient clerk, glancing up. "We had a regular field day. A popliteal aneurism, a Colles' fracture, a spina bifida, a tropical abscess, and an elephantiasis. How's that for a single haul?"

"I'm sorry I missed it. But they'll come again, I suppose. What's up with the old gentleman?"

A broken workman was sitting in the shadow, rocking himself slowly to and fro and groaning. A woman beside him was trying to console him, patting his shoulder with a hand which was spotted over with curious little white blisters.

"It's a fine carbuncle," said the clerk, with the air of a connoisseur who describes his orchids to one who can appreciate them. "It's on his back, and the passage is draughty, so we must not look at it, must we, daddy? Pemphigus," he added carelessly, pointing to the woman's disfigured hands. "Would you care to stop and take out a metacarpal?"

"No, thank you, we are due at Archer's. Come on;" and they rejoined the throng which was hurrying to the theatre of the famous surgeon.

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The tiers of horse-shoe benches, rising from the floor to the ceiling, were already packed, and the novice as he entered saw vague, curving lines of faces in front of him, and heard the deep buzz of a hundred voices and sounds of laughter from somewhere up above him. His companion spied an opening on the second bench, and they both squeezed into it.

"This is grand," the senior man whispered; "you'll have a rare view of it all."

Only a single row of heads intervened between them and the operating table. It was of unpainted deal, plain, strong and scrupulously clean. A sheet of brown waterproofing covered half of it, and beneath stood a large tin tray full of sawdust. On the further side, in front of the window, there was a board which was strewn with glittering instruments, forceps, tenacula, saws, canulas and trocars. A line of knives, with long, thin, delicate blades, lay at one side. Two young men lounged in front of this; one threading needles, the other doing something to a brass coffee-pot-like thing which hissed out puffs of steam.

"That's Peterson," whispered the senior. "The big, bald man in the front row. He's the skin-grafting man, you know. And that's Anthony Browne, who took a larynx out successfully last winter. And there's Murphy the pathologist, and Stoddart the eye man. You'll come to know them all soon."

"Who are the two men at the table?"

"Nobody—dressers. One has charge of the instruments and the other of the puffing Billy. It's Lister's antiseptic spray, you know, and Archer's one of the carbolic acid men. Hayes is the leader

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of the cleanliness-and-cold-water school, and they all hate each other like poison."

A flutter of interest passed through the closely-packed benches as a woman in petticoat and bodice was led in by two nurses. A red woollen shawl was draped over her head and round her neck. The face which looked out from it was that of a woman in the prime of her years, but drawn with suffering and of a peculiar bees-wax tint. Her head drooped as she walked, and one of the nurses, with her arm round her waist, was whispering consolation in her ear. She gave a quick side glance at the instrument table as she passed, but the nurses turned her away from it.

"What ails her?" asked the novice.

"Cancer of the parotid. It's the devil of a case, extends right away back behind the carotids. There's hardly a man but Archer would dare to follow it. Ah, here he is himself."

As he spoke, a small, brisk, iron-grey man came striding into the room, rubbing his hands together as he walked. He had a clean-shaven face of the Naval officer type, with large, bright eyes, and a firm, straight mouth. Behind him came his big house surgeon with his gleaming pince-nez and a trail of dressers, who grouped themselves into the corners of the room.

"Gentlemen," cried the surgeon in a voice as hard and brisk as his manner. "We have here an interesting case of tumour of the parotid, originally cartilaginous but now assuming malignant characteristics, and therefore requiring excision. On to the table, nurse! Thank you! Chloroform, clerk! Thank you! You can take the shawl off, nurse."

The woman lay back upon the waterproofed

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pillow and her murderous tumour lay revealed. In itself it was a pretty thing, ivory white with a mesh of blue veins, and curving gently from jaw to chest. But the lean, yellow face, and the stringy throat were in horrible contrast with the plumpness and sleekness of this monstrous growth. The surgeon placed a hand on each side of it and pressed it slowly backward and forward.

"Adherent at one place, gentlemen," he cried. "The growth involves the carotids and jugulars, and passes behind the ramus of the jaw, whither we must be prepared to follow it. It is impossible to say how deep our dissection may carry us. Carbolic tray, thank you! Dressings of carbolic gauze, if you please! Push the chloroform, Mr. Johnson. Have the small saw ready."

The patient was moaning gently under the towel which had been placed over her face. She tried to raise her arms and to draw up her knees, but two dressers restrained her. The heavy air was full of the penetrating smells of carbolic acid and of chloroform. A muffled cry came from under the towel and then a snatch of a song, sung in a high, quavering, monotonous voice.

"He says, says he,  
If you fly with me  
You'll be mistress of the ice-cream van;  
You'll be mistress of the——"

It mumbled off into a drone and stopped. The surgeon came across, still rubbing his hands, and spoke to an elderly man in front of the novice.

"Narrow squeak for the Government," he said.

"Oh, ten is enough."

"They won't have ten long. They'd do better to resign before they are driven to it."

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"Oh, I should fight it out."

"What's the use? They can't get past the committee, even if they get a vote in the House. I was talking to——"

"Patient's ready, sir," said the dresser.

"Talking to M'Donald—but I'll tell you about it presently." He walked back to the patient, who was breathing in long, heavy gasps. "I propose," said he, passing his hand over the tumour in an almost caressing fashion, "to make a free incision over the posterior border and to take another forward at right angles to the lower end of it. Might I trouble you for a medium knife, Mr. Johnson?"

The novice, with eyes which were dilating with horror, saw the surgeon pick up the long, gleaming knife, dip it into a tin basin and balance it in his fingers as an artist might his brush. Then he saw him pinch up the skin above the tumour with his left hand. At the sight, his nerves, which had already been tried once or twice that day, gave way utterly. His head swam round and he felt that in another instant he might faint. He dared not look at the patient. He dug his thumbs into his ears lest some scream should come to haunt him, and he fixed his eyes rigidly upon the wooden ledge in front of him. One glance, one cry, would, he knew, break down the shred of self-possession which he still retained. He tried to think of cricket, of green fields and rippling water, of his sisters at home—of anything rather than of what was going on so near him.

And yet, somehow, even with his ears stopped up, sounds seemed to penetrate to him and to carry their own tale. He heard, or thought that he heard, the long hissing of the carbolic engine.

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Then he was conscious of some movement among the dressers. Were there groans too breaking in upon him, and some other sound, some fluid sound, which was more dreadfully suggestive still? His mind would keep building up every step of the operation, and fancy made it more ghastly than fact could have been. His nerves tingled and quivered. Minute by minute the giddiness grew more marked, the numb, sickly feeling at his heart more distressing. And then suddenly, with a groan, his head pitching forward and his brow cracking sharply upon the narrow, wooden shelf in front of him, he lay in a dead faint.

When he came to himself he was lying in the empty theatre with his collar and shirt undone. The third year's man was dabbing a wet sponge over his face, and a couple of grinning dressers were looking on.

"All right," cried the novice, sitting-up and rubbing his eyes; "I'm sorry to have made an ass of myself."

"Well, so I should think," said his companion.

"What on earth did you faint about?"

"I couldn't help it. It was that operation."

"What operation?"

"Why, that cancer."

There was a pause, and then the three students burst out laughing.

"Why, you juggins," cried the senior man, "there never was an operation at all. They found the patient didn't stand the chloroform well, and so the whole thing was off. Archer has been giving us one of his racy lectures, and you fainted just in the middle of his favourite story."



## A STRAGGLER OF '15

It was a dull October morning, and heavy, rolling fog-wreaths lay low over the wet, grey roofs of the Woolwich houses. Down in the long, brick-lined streets all was sodden and greasy and cheerless. From the high buildings of the Arsenal came the whirr of many wheels, the thudding of weights, and the buzz and babel of human toil. Beyond, the dwellings of the working-men, smoke-stained and unlovely, radiated away in a lessening perspective of narrowing road and dwindling wall.

There were few folk in the streets, for the toilers had all been absorbed since break of day by the huge, smoke-spouting monster, which sucked in the manhood of the town, to belch it forth, weary and work-stained, every night. Stout women, with thick, red arms and dirty aprons, stood upon the whitened doorsteps, leaning upon their brooms, and shrieking their morning greetings across the road. One had gathered a small knot of cronies around her, and was talking energetically, with little shrill titters from her audience to punctuate her remarks.

"Old enough to know better!" she cried, in answer to an exclamation from one of the listeners. "Why, 'ow old is he at all? Blessed if I could ever make out."

"Well, it ain't so hard to reckon," said a sharp-featured, pale-faced woman, with watery-blue eyes. "He's been at the battle o' Waterloo, and has the pension and medal to prove it."

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"That were a ter'ble long time agone," remarked a third. "It were afore I were born."

"It were fifteen year after the beginnin' of the century," cried a younger woman, who had stood leaning against the wall, with a smile of superior knowledge upon her face. "My Bill was a-saying so last Sabbath, when I spoke to him o' old Daddy Brewster, here."

"And suppose he spoke truth, Missus Simpson, 'ow long agone do that make it?"

"It's eighty-one now," said the original speaker, checking off the years upon her coarse, red fingers, "and that were fifteen. Ten, and ten, and ten, and ten, and ten—why, it's only sixty and six year, so he ain't so old after all."

"But he weren't a new-born babe at the battle, silly," cried the young woman, with a chuckle. "S'pose he were only twenty, then he couldn't be less than six-and-eighty now, at the lowest."

"Ay, he's that—every day of it," cried several.

"I've had 'bout enough of it," remarked the large woman, gloomily. "Unless his young niece, or grand-niece, or whatever she is, come to-day, I'm off; and he can find some one else to do his work. Your own 'ome first, says I."

"Ain't he quiet, then, Missus Simpson?" asked the youngest of the group.

"Listen to him now," she answered, with her hand half raised, and her head turned slantwise toward the open door. From the upper floor came a shuffling, sliding sound, with a sharp tapping of a stick. "There he go back and forrards doing what he call his sentry-go. 'Arf the night through he's at that game, the silly old juggins. At six o'clock this very mornin' there he was beatin' with a stick

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at my door. 'Turn out guard,' he cried, and a lot more jargon that I could make nothing of. Then what with his coughin' and 'awkin' and spittin', there ain't no gettin' a wink o' sleep. Hark to him now!"

"Missus Simpson! Missus Simpson!" cried a cracked and querulous voice from above.

"That's him," she cried, nodding her head with an air of triumph. "He do go on somethin' scandalous. Yes, Mister Brewster, sir."

"I want my morning ration, Missus Simpson."

"It's just ready, Mister Brewster, sir."

"Blessed if he ain't like a baby cryin' for its pap," said the young woman.

"I feel as if I could shake his old bones up sometimes," cried Mrs. Simpson viciously. "But who's for a 'arf of fourpenny?"

The whole company were about to shuffle off to the public-house, when a young girl stepped across the road and touched the housekeeper timidly upon the arm. "I think that is No. 56 Arsenal View," she said. "Can you tell me if Mr. Brewster lives here?"

The housekeeper looked critically at the newcomer. She was a girl of about twenty, broad-faced and comely, with a turned-up nose and large, honest, grey eyes. Her print dress, her straw hat with its bunch of glaring poppies, and the bundle which she carried had all a smack of the country.

"You're Norah Brewster, I s'pose," said Mrs. Simpson, eyeing her up and down with no friendly gaze.

"Yes; I've come to look after my grand-uncle Gregory."

"And a good job too," cried the housekeeper,

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with a toss of her head. "It's about time that some of his own folk took a turn at it, for I've had enough of it. There you are, young woman! in you go, and make yourself at home. There's tea in the caddy, and bacon on the dresser, and the old man will be about you if you don't fetch him his breakfast. I'll send for my things in the evenin'."

With a nod she strolled off with her attendant gossips in the direction of the public-house.

Thus left to her own devices, the country girl walked into the front room and took off her hat and jacket. It was a low-roofed apartment with a sputtering fire, upon which a small brass kettle was singing cheerily. A stained cloth lay over half the table, with an empty brown teapot, a loaf of bread, and some coarse crockery. Norah Brewster looked rapidly about her, and in an instant took over her new duties. Ere five minutes had passed the tea was made, two slices of bacon were frizzling on the pan, the table was re-arranged, the antimacassars straightened over the sombre brown furniture, and the whole room had taken a new air of comfort and neatness. This done, she looked round curiously at the prints upon the walls. Over the fireplace, in a small, square case, a brown medal caught her eye, hanging from a strip of purple ribbon. Beneath was a slip of newspaper cutting. She stood on her tiptoes, with her fingers on the edge of the mantel-piece, and craned her neck up to see it, glancing down from time to time at the bacon which simmered and hissed beneath her. The cutting was yellow with age, and ran in this way:—

"On Tuesday an interesting ceremony was performed at the barracks of the third regiment of

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guards, when, in the presence of the Prince Regent, Lord Hill, Lord Saltoun, and an assemblage which comprised beauty as well as valour, a special medal was presented to Corporal Gregory Brewster, of Captain Haldane's flank company, in recognition of his gallantry in the recent great battle in the Lowlands. It appears that on the ever-memorable 18th of June, four companies of the third guards and of the Coldstreams, under the command of Colonels Maitland and Byng, held the important farm-house of Hougoumont at the right of the British position. At a critical point of the action these troops found themselves short of powder. Seeing that Generals Foy and Jerome Buonaparte were again massing their infantry for an attack on the position, Colonel Byng despatched Corporal Brewster to the rear to hasten up the reserve ammunition. Brewster came upon two powder tumbrils of the Nassau division, and succeeded, after menacing the drivers with his musket, in inducing them to convey their powder to Hougoumont. In his absence, however, the hedges surrounding the position had been set on fire by a howitzer battery of the French, and the passage of the carts full of powder became a most hazardous matter. The first tumbril exploded, blowing the driver to fragments. Daunted by the fate of his comrade, the second driver turned his horses, but Corporal Brewster, springing upon his seat, hurled the man down, and urging the powder cart through the flames, succeeded in forcing a way to his companions. To this gallant deed may be directly attributed the success of the British arms, for without powder it would have been impossible to have held Hougoumont, and the Duke of Wellington had repeatedly

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declared that had Hougoumont fallen, as well as La Haye Sainte, he would have found it impossible to have held his ground. Long may the heroic Brewster live to treasure the medal which he has so bravely won, and to look back with pride to the day when in the presence of his comrades he received this tribute to his valour from the august hands of the first gentleman of the realm."

The reading of this old cutting increased in the girl's mind the veneration which she had always had for her warrior kinsman. From her infancy he had been her hero, and she remembered how her father used to speak of his courage and his strength, how he could strike down a bullock with a blow of his fist, and carry a fat sheep under either arm. True that she had never seen him, but a rude painting at home, which depicted a square-faced, clean-shaven, stalwart man with a great bearskin cap, rose ever before her memory when she thought of him.

She was still gazing at the brown medal and wondering what the "*dulce et decorum est*" might mean, which was inscribed upon the edge, when there came a sudden tapping and shuffling upon the stair, and there at the door was standing the very man who had been so often in her thoughts.

But could this indeed be he? Where was the martial air, the flashing eye, the warrior face which she had pictured? There, framed in the doorway, was a huge, twisted old man, gaunt and puckered, with twitching hands, and shuffling, purposeless feet. A cloud of fluffy white hair, a red-veined nose, two thick tufts of eyebrow and a pair of dimly-questioning, watery-blue eyes—these were

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what met her gaze. He leaned forward upon a stick, while his shoulders rose and fell with his crackling, rasping breathing.

"I want my morning rations," he crooned, as he stumped forward to his chair. "The cold nips me without 'em. See to my fingers!"

He held out his distorted hands, all blue at the tips, wrinkled and gnarled, with huge, projecting knuckles.

"It's nigh ready," answered the girl, gazing at him with wonder in her eyes. "Don't you know who I am, grand-uncle? I am Norah Brewster from Witham."

"Rum is warm," mumbled the old man, rocking to and fro in his chair, "and schnapps is warm and there's 'eat in soup, but it's a dish o' tea for me. What did you say your name was?"

"Norah Brewster."

"You can speak out, lass. Seems to me folk's voices isn't as loud as they used."

"I'm Norah Brewster, uncle. I'm your grand-niece come from down Essex way to live with you."

"You'll be brother Jarge's girl! Lor', to think o' little Jarge having a girl."

He chuckled hoarsely to himself, and the long, stringy sinews of his throat jerked and quivered.

"I am the daughter of your brother George's son," said she as she turned the bacon.

"Lor', but little Jarge was a rare un," he continued. "Eh, by Jimini, there was no chousing Jarge. He's got a bull pup o' mine that I gave him when I took the bounty. You've heard him speak of it, likely?"

"Why, Grandpa George has been dead this twenty years," said she, pouring out the tea.

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"Well, it was a bootiful pup—ay, a well-bred un, by Jimini! I'm cold for lack of my rations. Rum is good, and so is schnapps, but I'd as lief have tea as either."

He breathed heavily while he devoured his food.

"It's a middlin' goodish way you've come," said he at last. "Likely the stage left yesternight."

"The what, uncle?"

"The coach that brought you."

"Nay, I came by the mornin' train."

"Lor', now, think o' that! You ain't afeared of those new-fangled things! To think of you coming by railroad like that! What's the world a-comin' to?"

There was silence for some minutes while Norah sat stirring her tea and glancing sideways at the bluish lips and champing jaws of her companion.

"You must have seen a deal of life, uncle," said she. "It must seem a long, long time to you!"

"Not so very long, neither. I'm ninety come Candlemas, but it don't seem long since I took the bounty. And that battle, it might have been yesterday. I've got the smell of the burned powder in my nose yet. Eh, but I get a power o' good from my rations!"

He did indeed look less worn and colourless than when she first saw him. His face was flushed and his back more erect.

"Have you read that?" he asked, jerking his head toward the cutting.

"Yes, uncle, and I am sure you must be proud of it."

"Ah, it was a great day for me! A great day! The Regent was there, and a fine body of a man, too! 'The ridgment is proud of you,' says he.



## A STRAGGLER OF '15

‘And I’m proud of the ridgment,’ say I. ‘A damned good answer, too!’ says he to Lord Hill, and they both bust out a-laughing. But what be you a-peepin’ out o’ the window for?”

“Oh, uncle, here’s a regiment of soldiers coming down the street, with the band playing in front of them.”

“A ridgment, eh? Where be my glasses? Lor’, but I can hear the band, as plain as plain. Here’s the pioneers an’ the drum-major! What be their number, lass?”

His eyes were shining and his bony, yellow fingers, like the claws of some fierce old bird, dug into her shoulder.

“They don’t seem to have no number, uncle. They’ve something wrote on their shoulders. Oxfordshire, I think it be.”

“Ah, yes,” he growled. “I heard as they’d dropped the numbers and given them new-fangled names. There they go, by Jimini! They’re young mostly, but they hain’t forgot how to march. They have the swing—ay, I’ll say that for them. They’ve got the swing.”

He gazed after them until the last files had turned the corner, and the measured tramp of their marching had died away in the distance.

He had just regained his chair when the door opened and a gentleman stepped in.

“Ah, Mr. Brewster! Better to-day?” he asked.

“Come in, doctor! Yes, I’m better. But there’s a deal o’ bubbling in my chest. It’s all them toobes. If I could but cut the phlegm I’d be right. Can’t ye give me something to cut the phlegm?”

The doctor, a grave-faced, young man, put his fingers to the furrowed, blue-corded wrist.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"You must be careful," he said; "you must take no liberties."

The thin tide of life seemed to thrill rather than to throb under his finger.

The old man chuckled.

"I've got brother Jarge's girl to look after me now. She'll see I don't break barracks or do what I hadn't ought to; why, darn my skin, I knew something was amiss!"

"With what?"

"Why, with them soldiers. You saw them pass, doctor—eh? They'd forgot their stocks. Not one on 'em had his stock on." He croaked and chuckled for a long time over his discovery. "It wouldn't ha' done for the Dook!" he muttered. "No, by Jimini! the Dook would ha' had a word there."

The doctor smiled.

"Well, you are doing very well," said he. "I'll look in once a week or so and see how you are!" As Norah followed him to the door he beckoned her outside. "He is very weak," he whispered. "If you find him failing you must send for me."

"What ails him, doctor?"

"Ninety years ail him. His arteries are pipes of lime. His heart is shrunken and flabby. The man is worn out."

Norah stood watching the brisk figure of the young doctor and pondering over these new responsibilities which had come upon her. When she turned, a tall, brown-faced artillery man, with the three gold chevrons of sergeant upon his arm, was standing, carbine in hand, at her elbow.

"Good-morning, miss!" said he, raising one thick finger to his jaunty, yellow-banded cap. "I b'lieve there's an old gentleman lives here of the

## A STRAGGLER OF '15

name of Brewster, who was engaged in the battle o' Waterloo?"

"It's my grand-uncle, sir," said Norah, casting down her eyes before the keen, critical gaze of the young soldier. "He is in the front parlour."

"Could I have a word with him, miss? I'll call again if it don't chance to be convenient."

"I am sure that he would be very glad to see you, sir. He's in here, if you'll step in. Uncle, here's a gentleman who wants to speak with you."

"Proud to see you, sir—proud and glad, sir!" cried the sergeant, taking three steps forward into the room, and grounding his carbine while he raised his hand, palm forward, in a salute.

Norah stood by the door, with her mouth and eyes open, wondering whether her grand-uncle had ever, in his prime, looked like this magnificent creature; and whether he, in his turn, would ever come to resemble her grand-uncle.

The old man blinked up at his visitor, and shook his head slowly.

"Sit ye down, sergeant," said he, pointing with his stick to a chair. "You're full young for the stripes. Lordy, it's easier to get three now than one in my day. Gunners were old soldiers then, and the grey hairs came quicker than the three stripes."

"I am eight years' service, sir," cried the sergeant. "Macdonald is my name—Sergeant Macdonald, of H Battery, Southern Artillery Division. I have called as the spokesman of my mates at the gunners' barracks to say that we are proud to have you in the town, sir."

Old Brewster chuckled and rubbed his bony hands.

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"That were what the Regent said," he cried. "The ridgment is proud of ye," says he. 'And I am proud of the ridgment,' says I. 'And a damned good answer, too,' says he, and he and Lord Hill bust out—a-laughin'."

"The non-commissioned mess would be proud and honoured to see you, sir," said Sergeant Macdonald. "And if you could step as far you'll always find a pipe o' baccy and a glass of grog awaitin' you."

The old man laughed until he coughed.

"Like to see me, would they? The dogs!" said he. "Well, well, when the warm weather comes again I'll maybe drop in. It's likely that I'll drop in. Too grand for a canteen, eh? Got your mess just the same as the oficers. What's the world a-coming to at all!"

"You was in the line, sir, was you not?" asked the sergeant, respectfully.

"The line?" cried the old man with shrill scorn. "Never wore a shako in my life. I am a guardsman, I am. Served in the third guards—the same they call now the Scots Guards. Lordy, but they have all marched away, every man of them, from old Colonel Byng down to the drummer boys, and here am I a straggler—that's what I am, sergeant, a straggler! I'm here when I ought to be there. But it ain't my fault neither, for I'm ready to fall in when the word comes."

"We've all got to muster there," answered the sergeant. "Won't you try my baccy, sir?" handing over a sealskin pouch.

Old Brewster drew a blackened clay pipe from his pocket, and began to stuff the tobacco into the bowl. In an instant it slipped through his fingers,

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and was broken to pieces on the floor. His lip quivered, his nose puckered up, and he began crying with the long, helpless sobs of a child.

"I've broke my pipe," he cried.

"Don't, uncle, oh don't," cried Norah, bending over him and patting his white head as one soothes a baby. "It don't matter. We can easy get another."

"Don't you fret yourself, sir," said the sergeant. "'Ere's a wooden pipe with an amber mouth, if you'll do me the honour to accept it from me. I'd be real glad if you will take it."

"Jimini!" cried he, his smiles breaking in an instant through his tears. "It's a fine pipe. See to my new pipe, Norah. I lay that Jarge never had a pipe like that. You've got your firelock there, sergeant."

"Yes, sir, I was on my way back from the butts when I looked in."

"Let me have the feel of it. Lordy, but it seems like old times to have one's hand on a musket. What's the manual, sergeant, eh? Cock your firelock—look to your priming—present your firelock—eh, sergeant? Oh, Jimini! I've broke your musket in halves!"

"That's all right, sir," cried the gunner, laughing, "you pressed on the lever and opened the breech-piece. That's where we load 'em, you know."

"Load 'em at the wrong end! Well, well, to think o' that. And no ramrod, neither! I've heered tell of it, but I never believed it afore. Ah, it won't come up to Brown Bess. When there's work to be done you mark my word and see if they don't come back to Brown Bess."

"By the Lord, sir," cried the sergeant, hotly,

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"they need some change out in South Africa now. I see by this mornin's paper that the Government has knuckled under to these Boers. They're hot about it at the non-com. mess, I can tell you, sir."

"Eh, eh," croaked old Brewster. "By Gosh! it wouldn't ha' done for the Dook; the Dook would ha' had a word to say over that!"

"Ah, that he would, sir," cried the sergeant; "and God send us another like him. But I've wearied you enough for one sitting. I'll look in again, and I'll bring a comrade or two with me if I may, for there isn't one but would be proud to have speech with you."

So, with another salute to the veteran, and a gleam of white teeth at Norah, the big gunner withdrew, leaving a memory of blue cloth and of gold braid behind him. Many days had not passed, however, before he was back again, and during all the long winter he was a frequent visitor at Arsenal View. He brought others with him, and soon through all the lines a pilgrimage to Daddy Brewster's came to be looked upon as the proper thing to do. Gunners and sappers, linesmen and dragoons, came bowing and bobbing into the little parlour, with clatter of side-arms and clink of spurs, stretching their long legs across the patchwork rug, and hunting in the front of their tunics for the screw of tobacco, or paper of snuff, which they had brought as a sign of their esteem.

It was a deadly cold winter, with six weeks on end of snow on the ground, and Norah had a hard task to keep the life in that time-worn body. There were times when his mind would leave him, and when, save an animal outcry when the hour of his meals came round, no word would fall from him. As the warm weather came once more, how-

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ever, and the green buds peeped forth again upon the trees, the blood thawed in his veins, and he would even drag himself as far as the door to bask in the life-giving sunshine.

"It do hearten me up so," he said one morning, as he glowed in a hot May sun. "It's a job to keep back the flies, though! They get owdacious in this weather and they do plague me cruel."

"I'll keep them off you, uncle," said Norah.

"Eh, but it's fine! This sunshine makes me think o' the glory to come. You might read me a bit o' the Bible, lass. I find it wonderful soothing."

"What part would you like, uncle?"

"Oh, them wars."

"The wars?"

"Ay, keep to the wars! Give me the Old Testament for chice. There's more taste to it, to my mind! When parson comes he wants to get off to something else, but it's Joshua or nothing with me. Them Israelites was good soldiers—good growed soldiers, all of 'em."

"But, uncle," pleaded Norah, "it's all peace in the next world."

"No, it ain't, gal."

"Oh yes, uncle, surely!"

The old corporal knocked his stick irritably upon the ground.

"I tell ye it ain't, gal. I asked parson."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said there was to be a last fight. He even gave it a name, he did. The battle of Arm—Arm——"

"Armageddon."

"Ay, that's the name parson said. I 'specs the third guards'll be there. And the Dook—the Dook'll have a word to say."

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An elderly, grey-whiskered gentleman had been walking down the street, glancing up at the numbers of the houses. Now, as his eyes fell upon the old man, he came straight for him.

"Hullo," said he, "perhaps you are Gregory Brewster?"

"My name, sir," answered the veteran.

"You are the same Brewster, as I understand, who is on the roll of the Scots Guards as having been present at the battle of Waterloo?"

"I am that man, sir, though we called it the third guards in those days. It was a fine regiment, and they only need me to make up a full muster."

"Tut, tut, they'll have to wait years for that," said the gentleman heartily; "but I am the colonel of the Scots Guards, and I thought I would like to have a word with you."

Old Gregory Brewster was up in an instant with his hand to his rabbit-skin cap.

"God bless me!" he cried, "to think of it; to think of it."

"Hadn't the gentleman better come in?" suggested the practical Norah from behind the door.

"Surely, sir, surely; walk in, sir, if I may be so bold."

In his excitement he had forgotten his stick, and as he led the way into the parlour, his knees tottered, and he threw out his hands. In an instant the colonel had caught him on one side and Norah on the other.

"Easy and steady," said the colonel as he led him to his arm-chair.

"Thank ye, sir; I was near gone that time. But, Lordy, why, I can scarce believe it. To think of me, the corporal of the flank company, and you



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the colonel of the battalion. Jimini! how things come round, to be sure."

"Why, we are very proud of you in London," said the colonel. "And so you are actually one of the men who held Hougoumont?" He looked at the bony, trembling hands with their huge, knotted knuckles, the stringy throat, and the heaving, rounded shoulders. Could this, indeed, be the last of that band of heroes? Then he glanced at the half-filled phials, the blue liniment bottles, the long-spouted kettle, and the sordid details of the sick-room. "Better, surely, had he died under the blazing rafters of the Belgian farm-house," thought the colonel.

"I hope that you are pretty comfortable and happy," he remarked after a pause.

"Thank ye, sir. I have a good deal of trouble with my toobes—a deal of trouble. You wouldn't think the job it is to cut the phlegm. And I need my rations. I gets cold without 'em. And the flies! I ain't strong enough to fight against them."

"How's the memory?" asked the colonel.

"Oh, there ain't nothing amiss there. Why, sir, I could give you the name of every man in Captain Haldane's flank company."

"And the battle—you remember it?"

"Why, I sees it all afore me every time I shuts my eyes. Lordy, sir, you wouldn't hardly believe how clear it is to me. There's our line from the paregoric bottle right along to the snuff-box. D'ye see? Well, then, the pill-box is for Hougoumont on the right, where we was; and Norah's thimble for La Haye Sainte. There it is all right, sir, and here were our guns, and here, behind, the reserves and the Belgians. Ach, them Belgians!" He spat

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furiously into the fire. "Then here's the French where my pipe lies, and over here, where I put my baccy pouch, was the Proosians a-comin' up on our left flank. Jimini! but it was a glad sight to see the smoke of their guns."

"And what was it that struck you most, now, in connection with the whole affair?" asked the colonel.

"I lost three half-crowns over it, I did," crooned old Brewster. "I shouldn't wonder if I was never to get that money now. I lent 'em to Jabez Smith, my rear rank man, in Brussels. 'Only till pay-day, Grig,' says he. By Gosh! he was stuck by a lancer at Quarter Brass, and me with not so much as a slip o' paper to prove the debt! Them three half-crowns is as good as lost to me."

The colonel rose from his chair, laughing.

"The officers of the Guards want you to buy yourself some little trifle which may add to your comfort," he said. "It is not from me, so you need not thank me."

He took up the old man's tobacco pouch and slipped a crisp bank note inside it.

"Thank ye, kindly, sir. But there's one favour that I would like to ask you, colonel."

"Yes, my man?"

"If I'm called, colonel, you won't grudge me a flag and a firing party?"

"All right, my man, I'll see to it," said the colonel. "Good-bye; I hope to have nothing but good news from you."

"A kind gentleman, Norah," croaked old Brewster, as they saw him walk past the window; "but, Lordy, he ain't fit to hold the stirrup o' my Colonel Byng."

## A STRAGGLER OF '15

It was on the very next day that the corporal took a sudden change for the worse. Even the golden sunlight streaming through the window seemed unable to warm that withered frame. The doctor came and shook his head in silence. All day the man lay with only his puffing blue lips and the twitching of his scraggy neck to show that he still held the breath of life. Norah and Sergeant Macdonald had sat by him in the afternoon, but he had shown no consciousness of their presence. He lay peacefully, his eyes half-closed, his hands under his cheek, as one who is very weary.

They had left him for an instant, and were sitting in the front room where Norah was preparing the tea, when of a sudden they heard a shout that rang through the house. Loud and clear and swelling, it pealed in their ears, a voice full of strength and energy and fiery passion.

"The guards need powder," it cried, and yet again, "the guards need powder."

The sergeant sprang from his chair and rushed in, followed by the trembling Norah. There was the old man standing up, his blue eyes sparkling, his white hair bristling, his whole figure towering and expanding, with eagle head and glance of fire.

"The guards need powder," he thundered once again, "and by God they shall have it!"

He threw up his long arms and sank back with a groan into his chair. The sergeant stooped over him, and his face darkened.

"Oh, Archie, Archie," sobbed the frightened girl, "what do you think of him?"

The sergeant turned away.

"I think," said he, "that the third guards have a full muster now."

## THE THIRD GENERATION

SCUDAMORE LANE, sloping down riverward from just behind the Monument, lies at night in the shadow of two black and monstrous walls which loom high above the glimmer of the scattered gas-lamps. The foot-paths are narrow, and the causeway is paved with rounded cobblestones so that the endless drays roar along it like so many breaking waves. A few old-fashioned houses lie scattered among the business premises, and in one of these—half way down on the left-hand side—Dr. Horace Selby conducts his large practice. It is a singular street for so big a man, but a specialist who has an European reputation can afford to live where he likes. In his particular branch, too, patients do not always consider seclusion to be a disadvantage.

It was only ten o'clock. The dull roar of the traffic which converged all day upon London Bridge had died away now to a mere confused murmur. It was raining heavily, and the gas shone dimly through the streaked and dripping glass, throwing little yellow circles upon the glistening cobblestones. The air was full of the sounds of rain, the thin swish of its fall, the heavier drip from the eaves, and the swirl and gurgle down the two steep gutters and through the sewer grating. There was only one figure in the whole length of Scudamore Lane. It was that of a man, and it stood outside the door of Dr. Horace Selby.

He had just rung and was waiting for an answer.

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The fanlight beat full upon the gleaming shoulders of his waterproof and upon his upturned features. It was a wan, sensitive, clear-cut face, with some subtle, nameless peculiarity in its expression—something of the startled horse in the white-rimmed eye, something, too, of the helpless child in the drawn cheek and the weakening of the lower lip. The man-servant knew the stranger as a patient at a bare glance at those frightened eyes. Such a look had been seen at that door before.

“Is the doctor in?”

The man hesitated.

“He has had a few friends to dinner, sir. He does not like to be disturbed outside his usual hours, sir.”

“Tell him that I *must* see him. Tell him that it is of the very first importance. Here is my card.” He fumbled with his trembling fingers in trying to draw one from the case. “Sir Francis Norton is the name. Tell him that Sir Francis Norton of Deane Park must see him at once.”

“Yes, sir.” The butler closed his fingers upon the card and the half-sovereign which accompanied it. “Better hang your coat up here in the hall. It is very wet. Now, if you will wait here in the consulting-room I have no doubt that I shall be able to send the doctor in to you.”

It was a large and lofty room in which the young baronet found himself. The carpet was so soft and thick that his feet made no sound as he walked across it. The two gas-jets were turned only half way up, and the dim light with the faint aromatic smell which filled the air had a vaguely religious suggestion. He sat down in a shining leather arm-chair by the smouldering fire and looked gloomily

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about him. Two sides of the room were taken up with books, fat and sombre, with broad gold lettering upon their backs. Beside him was the high, old-fashioned mantelpiece of white marble, the top of it strewn with cotton wadding and bandages, graduated measures and little bottles. There was one, with a broad neck, just above him, containing bluestone, and another narrower one with what looked like the ruins of a broken pipe stem, and "Caustic" outside upon a red label. Thermometers, hypodermic syringes, bistouries and spatulas were scattered thickly about, both on the mantelpiece and on the central table on either side of the sloping desk. On the same table to the right stood copies of the five books which Dr. Horace Selby had written upon the subject with which his name is peculiarly associated, while on the left, on the top of a red medical directory, lay a huge glass model of a human eye, the size of a turnip, which opened down the centre to expose the lens and double chamber within.

Sir Francis Norton had never been remarkable for his powers of observation, and yet he found himself watching these trifles with the keenest attention. Even the corrosion of the cork of an acid bottle caught his eye and he wondered that the doctor did not use glass stoppers. Tiny scratches where the light glinted off from the table, little stains upon the leather of the desk, chemical formulæ scribbled upon the labels of some of the phials—nothing was too slight to arrest his attention. And his sense of hearing was equally alert. The heavy ticking of the solemn black clock above the fireplace struck quite painfully upon his ears. Yet, in spite of it, and in spite also of the thick,

## THE THIRD GENERATION

old-fashioned, wooden partition walls, he could hear the voices of men talking in the next room and could even catch scraps of their conversation. "Second hand was bound to take it." "Why, you drew the last of them yourself." "How could I play the queen when I knew the ace was against me?" The phrases came in little spurts, falling back into the dull murmur of conversation. And then suddenly he heard a creaking of a door, and a step in the hall, and knew with a tingling mixture of impatience and horror that the crisis of his life was at hand.

Dr. Horace Selby was a large, portly man, with an imposing presence. His nose and chin were bold and pronounced, yet his features were puffy—a combination which would blend more freely with the wig and cravat of the early Georges, than with the close-cropped hair and black frock-coat of the end of the 19th century. He was clean-shaven, for his mouth was too good to cover, large, flexible and sensitive, with a kindly human softening at either corner, which, with his brown, sympathetic eyes, had drawn out many a shame-struck sinner's secret. Two masterful little bushy side-whiskers bristled out from under his ears, spindling away upward to merge in the thick curves of his brindled hair. To his patients there was something reassuring in the mere bulk and dignity of the man. A high and easy bearing in medicine, as in war, bears with it a hint of victories in the past, and a promise of others to come. Dr. Horace Selby's face was a consolation, and so, too, were the large, white, soothing hands, one of which he held out to his visitor.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting. It is a

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conflict of duties, you perceive. A host to his guests and an adviser to his patient. But now I am entirely at your disposal, Sir Francis. But, dear me, you are very cold."

"Yes, I am cold."

"And you are trembling all over. Tut, tut, this will never do. This miserable night has chilled you. Perhaps some little stimulant——"

"No, thank you. I would really rather not. And it is not the night which has chilled me. I am frightened, doctor."

The doctor half turned in his chair and patted the arch of the young man's knee as he might the neck of a restless horse.

"What, then?" he asked, looking over his shoulder at the pale face with the startled eyes.

Twice the young man parted his lips. Then he stooped with a sudden gesture and turning up the right leg of his trousers he pulled down his sock and thrust forward his shin. The doctor made a clicking noise with his tongue as he glanced at it.

"Both legs?"

"No, only one."

"Suddenly?"

"This morning."

"Hum!" The doctor pouted his lips, and drew his finger and thumb down the line of his chin.

"Can you account for it?" he said briskly.

"No."

A trace of sternness came into the large, brown eyes.

"I need not point out to you that unless the most absolute frankness——"

The patient sprang from his chair.

"So help me God, doctor," he cried, "I have



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nothing in my life with which to reproach myself. Do you think that I would be such a fool as to come here and tell you lies? Once for all, I have nothing to regret."

He was a pitiful, half-tragic and half-grotesque figure as he stood with one trouser leg rolled to his knee, and that ever-present horror still lurking in his eyes. A burst of merriment came from the card-players in the next room and the two looked at each other in silence.

"Sit down!" said the doctor abruptly. "Your assurance is quite sufficient." He stooped and ran his finger down the line of the young man's shin, raising it at one point. "Hum! Serpiginous!" he murmured, shaking his head; "any other symptoms?"

"My eyes have been a little weak."

"Let me see your teeth!" He glanced at them, and again made the gentle clicking sound of sympathy and disapprobation.

"Now the eye!" He lit a lamp at the patient's elbow, and holding a small crystal lens to concentrate the light, he threw it obliquely upon the patient's eye. As he did so a glow of pleasure came over his large, expressive face, a flush of such enthusiasm as the botanist feels when he packs the rare plant into his tin knapsack, or the astronomer when the long-sought comet first swims into the field of his telescope.

"This is very typical—very typical indeed," he murmured, turning to his desk and jotting down a few memoranda upon a sheet of paper. "Curiously enough, I am writing a monograph upon the subject. It is singular that you should have been able to furnish so well marked a case."

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He had so forgotten the patient in his symptom that he had assumed an almost congratulatory air toward its possessor. He reverted to human sympathy again as his patient asked for particulars.

"My dear sir, there is no occasion for us to go into strictly professional details together," said he soothingly. "If, for example, I were to say that you have interstitial keratitis, how would you be the wiser? There are indications of a strumous diathesis. In broad terms I may say that you have a constitutional and hereditary taint."

The young baronet sank back in his chair and his chin fell forward upon his chest. The doctor sprang to a side table and poured out a half glass of liqueur brandy which he held to his patient's lips. A little fleck of colour came into his cheeks as he drank it down.

"Perhaps I spoke a little abruptly," said the doctor. "But you must have known the nature of your complaint, why otherwise should you have come to me?"

"God help me, I suspected it—but only to-day when my leg grew bad. My father had a leg like this."

"It was from him, then?"

"No, from my grandfather. You have heard of Sir Rupert Norton, the great Corinthian?"

The doctor was a man of wide reading with a retentive memory. The name brought back to him instantly the remembrance of the sinister reputation of its owner—a notorious buck of the thirties, who had gambled and duelled and steeped himself in drink and debauchery until even the vile set with whom he consorted had shrunk

## THE THIRD GENERATION

away from him in horror, and left him to a sinister old age with the barmaid wife whom in some drunken frolic he had espoused. As he looked at the young man still leaning back in the leather chair, there seemed for the instant to flicker up behind him some vague presentiment of that foul old dandy with his dangling seals, many-wreathed scarf, and dark, satyric face. What was he now? An armful of bones in a mouldy box. But his deeds—they were living and rotting the blood in the veins of an innocent man.

"I see that you have heard of him," said the young baronet. "He died horribly, I have been told, but not more horribly than he had lived. My father was his only son. He was a studious man, fond of books and canaries and the country. But his innocent life did not save him."

"His symptoms were cutaneous, I understand."

"He wore gloves in the house. That was the first thing I can remember. And then it was his throat, and then his legs. He used to ask me so often about my own health, and I thought him so fussy, for how could I tell what the meaning of it was? He was always watching me—always with a sidelong eye fixed upon me. Now at last I know what he was watching for."

"Had you brothers or sisters?"

"None, thank God!"

"Well, well, it is a sad case, and very typical of many which come in my way. You are no lonely sufferer, Sir Francis. There are many thousands who bear the same cross as you do."

"But where's the justice of it, doctor?" cried the young man, springing from the chair and pacing up and down the consulting-room. "If I were heir to

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my grandfather's sins as well as to their results I could understand it, but I am of my father's type; I love all that is gentle and beautiful, music and poetry and art. The coarse and animal is abhorrent to me. Ask any of my friends and they would tell you that. And now that this vile, loathsome thing—Ach, I am polluted to the marrow, soaked in abomination! And why? Haven't I a right to ask why? Did I do it? Was it my fault? Could I help being born? And look at me now, blighted and blasted, just as life was at its sweetest! Talk about the sins of the father! How about the sins of the Creator!"

He shook his two clenched hands in the air, the poor, impotent atom with his pin-point of brain caught in the whirl of the infinite.

The doctor rose and placing his hands upon his shoulders he pressed him back into his chair again.

"There, there, my dear lad," said he. "You must not excite yourself! You are trembling all over. Your nerves cannot stand it. We must take these great questions upon trust. What are we after all? Half evolved creatures in a transition stage; nearer, perhaps, to the medusa on the one side than to perfected humanity on the other. With half a complete brain we can't expect to understand the whole of a complete fact, can we, now? It is all very dim and dark, no doubt, but I think Pope's famous couplet sums the whole matter up, and from my heart, after fifty years of varied experience, I can say that——"

But the young baronet gave a cry of impatience and disgust.

"Words, words, words! You can sit comfortably there in your chair and say them—and think

## THE THIRD GENERATION

them too, no doubt. You've had your life. But I've never had mine. You've healthy blood in your veins. Mine is putrid. And yet I am as innocent as you. What would words do for you if you were in this chair and I in that? Ah, it's such a mockery and a make-belief. Don't think me rude though, doctor. I don't mean to be that. I only say that it is impossible for you or any man to realise it. But I've a question to ask you, doctor. It's one on which my whole life must depend."

He writhed his fingers together in an agony of apprehension.

"Speak out, my dear sir. I have every sympathy with you."

"Do you think—do you think the poison has spent itself on me? Do you think if I had children that they would suffer?"

"I can only give one answer to that. 'The third and fourth generation,' says the trite old text. You may in time eliminate it from your system, but many years must pass before you can think of marriage."

"I am to be married on Tuesday," whispered the patient.

It was Dr. Horace Selby's turn to be thrilled with horror. There were not many situations which would yield such a sensation to his well seasoned nerves. He sat in silence while the babble of the card-table broke in again upon them. "We had a double ruff if you had returned a heart." "I was bound to clear the trumps." They were hot and angry about it.

"How could you?" cried the doctor severely. "It was criminal."

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"You forget that I have only learned how I stand to-day." He put his two hands to his temples and pressed them convulsively. "You are a man of the world, Dr. Selby. You have seen or heard of such things before. Give me some advice. I'm in your hands. It is all very sudden and horrible, and I don't think I am strong enough to bear it."

The doctor's heavy brows thickened into two straight lines and he bit his nails in perplexity.

"The marriage must not take place."

"Then what am I to do?"

"At all costs it must not take place."

"And I must give her up!"

"There can be no question about that."

The young man took out a pocket-book and drew from it a small photograph, holding it out toward the doctor. The firm face softened as he looked at it.

"It is very hard on you, no doubt. I can appreciate it more now that I have seen that. But there is no alternative at all. You must give up all thought of it."

"But this is madness, doctor—madness, I tell you. No, I won't raise my voice! I forgot myself! But realise it, man! I am to be married on Tuesday—this coming Tuesday, you know. And all the world knows it. How can I put such a public affront upon her? It would be monstrous."

"None the less it must be done. My dear sir, there is no way out of it."

"You would have me simply write brutally and break the engagement at this last moment without a reason? I tell you I couldn't do it."

"I had a patient once who found himself in a

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somewhat similar situation some years ago," said the doctor thoughtfully. "His device was a singular one. He deliberately committed a penal offence and so compelled the young lady's people to withdraw their consent to the marriage."

The young baronet shook his head.

"My personal honour is as yet unstained," said he. "I have little else left, but that at least I will preserve."

"Well, well, it's a nice dilemma and the choice lies with you."

"Have you no other suggestion?"

"You don't happen to have property in Australia?"

"None."

"But you have capital?"

"Yes."

"Then you could buy some—to-morrow morning, for example. A thousand mining shares would do. Then you might write to say that urgent business affairs have compelled you to start at an hour's notice to inspect your property. That would give you six months at any rate."

"Well, that would be possible—yes, certainly it would be possible. But think of her position—the house full of wedding presents—guests coming from a distance. It is awful. And you say there is no alternative."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then, I might write it now, and start to-morrow—eh? Perhaps you would let me use your desk. Thank you! I am so sorry to keep you from your guests so long. But I won't be a moment now." He wrote an abrupt note of a few lines. Then, with a sudden impulse, he tore it to

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

shreds and flung it into the fireplace. "No, I can't sit down and tell her a lie, doctor," said he rising. "We must find some other way out of this. I will think it over, and let you know my decision. You must allow me to double your fee as I have taken such an unconscionable time. Now, good-bye, and thank you a thousand times for your sympathy and advice."

"Why, dear me, you haven't even got your prescription yet. This is the mixture, and I should recommend one of these powders every morning and the chemist will put all directions upon the ointment box. You are placed in a cruel situation, but I trust that these may be but passing clouds. When may I hope to hear from you again?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Very good. How the rain is splashing in the street. You have your waterproof there. You will need it. Good-bye, then, until to-morrow."

He opened the door. A gust of cold, damp air swept into the hall. And yet the doctor stood for a minute or more watching the lonely figure which passed slowly through the yellow splotches of the gas-lamps and into the broad bars of darkness between. It was but his own shadow which trailed up the wall as he passed the lights, and yet it looked to the doctor's eye as though some huge and sombre figure walked by a mannikin's side, and led him silently up the lonely street.

Dr. Horace Selby heard again of his patient next morning and rather earlier than he had expected. A paragraph in the *Daily News* caused him to push away his breakfast untasted, and turned him sick and faint while he read it. "A



## THE THIRD GENERATION

Deplorable Accident " it was headed, and it ran in this way :—

" A fatal accident of a peculiarly painful character is reported from King William Street. About eleven o'clock last night a young man was observed, while endeavouring to get out of the way of a hansom, to slip and fall under the wheels of a heavy two-horse dray. On being picked up, his injuries were found to be of a most shocking character, and he expired while being conveyed to the hospital. An examination of his pocket-book and card-case shows beyond any question that the deceased is none other than Sir Francis Norton of Deane Park, who has only within the last year come into the baronetcy. The accident is made the more deplorable as the deceased, who was only just of age, was on the eve of being married to a young lady belonging to one of the oldest families in the south. With his wealth and his talents the ball of fortune was at his feet, and his many friends will be deeply grieved to know that his promising career has been cut short in so sudden and tragic a fashion."

## A FALSE START

"Is Dr. Horace Wilkinson at home?"

"I am he. Pray step in."

The visitor looked somewhat astonished at having the door opened to him by the master of the house.

"I wanted to have a few words."

The doctor, a pale, nervous young man, dressed in an ultra-professional, long black frock-coat, with a high white collar cutting off his dapper side-whiskers in the centre, rubbed his hands together and smiled. In the thick, burly man in front of him he scented a patient, and it would be his first. His scanty resources had begun to run somewhat low; and, although he had his first quarter's rent safely locked away in the right-hand drawer of his desk, it was becoming a question with him how he should meet the current expenses of his very simple house-keeping. He bowed, therefore, waved his visitor in, closed the door in a careless fashion, as though his own presence thereat had been a purely accidental circumstance, and finally led the burly stranger into his scantily-furnished front room, where he motioned him to a seat. Dr. Wilkinson planted himself behind his desk, and, placing his finger-tips together, he gazed with some apprehension at his companion. What was the matter with the man? He seemed very red in the face. Some of his old professors would have diagnosed his case by now, and would have electrified the patient by describing his own symptoms before

## A FALSE START

he had said a word about them. Dr. Horace Wilkinson racked his brains for some clew, but Nature had fashioned him as a plodder—a very reliable plodder, and nothing more. He could think of nothing save that the visitor's watch-chain had a very brassy appearance, with a corollary to the effect that he would be lucky if he got half-a-crown out of him. Still, even half-a-crown was something in those early days of struggle.

Whilst the doctor had been running his eyes over the stranger, the latter had been plunging his hands into pocket after pocket of his heavy coat. The heat of the weather, his dress, and this exercise of pocket rummaging had all combined to still further redden his face, which had changed from brick to beet, with a gloss of moisture on his brow. This extreme ruddiness brought a clew at last to the observant doctor. Surely it was not to be attained without alcohol. In alcohol lay the secret of this man's trouble. Some little delicacy was needed, however, in showing him that he had read his case aright, that at a glance he had penetrated to the inmost sources of his ailments.

"It's very hot," observed the stranger, mopping his forehead.

"Yes. It is weather which tempts one to drink rather more beer than is good for one," answered Dr. Horace Wilkinson looking very knowingly at his companion from over his finger-tips.

"Dear! dear! You shouldn't do that."

"I! I never touch beer."

"Neither do I. I've been an abstainer for twenty years."

This was depressing. Dr. Wilkinson blushed until he was nearly as red as the other.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"May I ask what I can do for you?" he asked, picking up his stethoscope and tapping it gently against his thumb-nail.

"Yes, I was just going to tell you. I heard of your coming, but I couldn't get round before——"

He broke into a nervous little cough.

"Yes," said the doctor encouragingly.

"I should have been here three weeks ago, but you know how these things get put off."

He coughed again behind his large, red hand.

"I do not think that you need say anything more," said the doctor, taking over the case with an easy air of command. "Your cough is quite sufficient. It is entirely bronchial by the sound. No doubt the mischief is circumscribed at present, but there is always the danger that it may spread, so you have done wisely to come to me. A little judicious treatment will soon set you right. Your waistcoat, please, but not your shirt. Puff out your chest, and say ninety-nine in a deep voice."

The red-faced man began to laugh.

"It's all right, doctor," said he. "That cough comes from chewing tobacco, and I know it's a very bad habit. Nine and ninepence is what I have to say to you, for I'm the officer of the Gas Company, and they have a claim against you for that on the meter."

Dr. Horace Wilkinson collapsed into his chair.

"Then you're not a patient?" he gasped.

"Never needed a doctor in my life, sir."

"Oh, that's all right." The doctor concealed his disappointment under an affectation of facetiousness. "You don't look as if you troubled them much. I don't know what we should do if every-

## A FALSE START

one were as robust. I shall call at the Company's offices and pay this small amount."

"If you could make it convenient, sir, now that I am here, it would save trouble——"

"Oh, certainly!"

These eternal little sordid money troubles were more trying to the doctor than plain living or scanty food. He took out his purse, and slid the contents on to the table. There were two half-crowns and some pennies. In his drawer he had ten golden sovereigns. But those were his rent. If he once broke in upon them he was lost. He would starve first.

"Dear me!" said he with a smile, as at some strange, unheard-of incident, "I have run short of small change. I am afraid I shall have to call upon the Company after all."

"Very well, sir."

The inspector rose, and with a practised glance around, which valued every article in the room, from the two-guinea carpet to the eight-shilling muslin curtains, he took his departure.

When he had gone, Dr. Wilkinson rearranged his room, as was his habit a dozen times in the day. He laid out his large *Quain's Dictionary of Medicine* in the forefront of the table, so as to impress the casual patient that he had ever the best authorities at his elbow. Then he cleared all the little instruments out of his pocket-case—the scissors, the forceps, the bistouries, the lancets—and he laid them all out beside the stethoscope, to make as good a show as possible. His ledger, day-book and visiting-book were spread in front of him. There was no entry in any of them yet, but it would not look well to have the covers too glossy

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

and new, so he rubbed them together, and daubed ink over them. Neither would it be well that any patient should observe that his name was the first in the book, so he filled up the first page of each with notes of imaginary visits paid to nameless patients during the last three weeks. Having done all this, he rested his head upon his hands and relapsed into the terrible occupation of waiting.

Terrible enough at any time to the young professional man, but most of all to one who knows that the weeks, and even the days, during which he can hold out are numbered. Economise as he would, the money would still slip away in the countless little claims which a man never understands until he lives under a roof-tree of his own. Dr. Wilkinson could not deny, as he sat at his desk and looked at the little heap of silver and coppers, that his chances of being a successful practitioner in Sutton were rapidly vanishing away.

And yet it was a bustling, prosperous town, with so much money in it that it seemed strange that a man with a trained brain and dexterous fingers should be starved out of it for want of employment. At his desk Dr. Horace Wilkinson could see the never-ending double current of people which ebbed and flowed in front of his window. It was a busy street, and the air was for ever filled with the dull roar of life, the grinding of the wheels, and the patter of countless feet. Men, women and children, thousands and thousands of them, passed in the day, and yet each was hurrying on upon his own business, scarce glancing at the small brass plate, or wasting a thought upon the man who waited in the front room. And yet how many of them would obviously, glaringly, have been the bet-

## A FALSE START

ter for his professional assistance. Dyspeptic men, anæmic women, blotched faces, bilious complexions, they flowed past him, they needing him, he needing them, and yet the remorseless bar of professional etiquette kept them for ever apart. What could he do? Could he stand at his own front door, pluck the casual stranger by the sleeve, and whisper in his ear, "Sir, you will forgive me for remarking that you are suffering from a severe attack of acne rosacea, which makes you a peculiarly unpleasant object. Allow me to suggest that a small prescription containing arsenic, which will not cost you more than you often spend upon a single meal, will be very much to your advantage." Such an address would be a degradation to the high and lofty profession of medicine, and there are no such sticklers for the ethics of that profession as some to whom she has been but a bitter and a grudging mother.

Dr. Horace Wilkinson was still looking moodily out of the window, when there came a sharp clang at the bell. Often it had rung, and with every ring his hopes had sprung up, only to dwindle away again, and change to leaden disappointment, as he faced some beggar or touting tradesman. But the doctor's spirit was young and elastic, and again, in spite of all experience, it responded to that exhilarating summons. He sprang to his feet, cast his eyes over the table, thrust out his medical books a little more prominently, and hurried to the door. A groan escaped him as he entered the hall. He could see through the half-glazed upper panels that a gipsy van, hung round with wicker tables and chairs, had halted before his door and that a couple of the vagrants, with a baby, were waiting outside. He had learned by experi-

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

ence that it was better not even to parley with such people.

"I have nothing for you," said he, loosing the latch by an inch. "Go away!" He closed the door, but the bell clanged once more. "Get away! Get away," he cried, impatiently, and walked back into his consulting-room. He had hardly seated himself when the bell went for the third time. In a towering passion he rushed back and flung open the door. "What the——"

"If you please, sir, we need a doctor."

In an instant he was rubbing his hands again, with his blandest professional smile. These were patients, then, whom he had tried to hunt from his doorstep—the very first patients, whom he had waited for so impatiently. They did not look very promising. The man, a tall, lank-haired gipsy, had gone back to the horse's head. There remained a small, hard-faced woman, with a great bruise all round her eye. She wore a yellow silk handkerchief round her head, and a baby, tucked in a red shawl, was pressed to her bosom.

"Pray step in, madam," said Dr. Horace Wilkinson, with his very best sympathetic manner. In this case, at least, there could be no mistake as to diagnosis. "If you will sit on this sofa, I shall very soon make you feel much more comfortable."

He poured a little water from his caraffe into a saucer, made a compress of lint, fastened it over the injured eye, and secured the whole with a spica bandage, *secundum artem*.

"Thank ye kindly, sir," said the woman when his work was finished; "that's nice and warm, and may God bless your honour. But it wasn't about my eye at all that I came to see a doctor."



## A FALSE START

"Not your eye?"

Dr. Horace Wilkinson was beginning to be a little doubtful as to the advantages of quick diagnosis. It is an excellent thing to be able to surprise a patient, but hitherto it was always the patient who had surprised him.

"The baby's got the measles."

The mother parted the red shawl, and exhibited a little, dark, black-eyed gipsy baby, whose swarthy face was all flushed and mottled with a dark red rash. The child breathed with a rattling sound, and it looked up at the doctor with eyes which were heavy with want of sleep and crusted together at the lids.

"Hum! Yes. Measles sure enough—and a smart attack."

"I just wanted you to see him, sir, so that you could signify."

"Could what?"

"Signify, if anything happened."

"Oh, I see—certify."

"And now that you've seen it, sir, I'll go on, for Reuben—that's my man—is in a hurry."

"But don't you want any medicine?"

"Oh, now you've seen it, it's all right. I'll let you know if anything happens."

"But you must have some medicine. The child is very ill."

He descended into the little room which he had fitted as a surgery, and he made up a two-ounce bottle of cooling medicine. In such cities as Sutton there are few patients who can afford to pay a fee to both doctor and chemist, so that unless the physician is prepared to play the part of both he will have little chance of making a living at either.

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"There is your medicine, madam. You will find the directions upon the bottle. Keep the child warm and give it a light diet."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

She shouldered her baby and marched for the door.

"Excuse me, madam," said the doctor nervously. "Don't you think it too small a matter to make a bill of? Perhaps it would be better if we had a settlement at once."

The gipsy woman looked at him reproachfully out of her one uncovered eye.

"Are you going to charge me for that?" she asked. "How much, then?"

"Well, say half-a-crown."

He mentioned the sum in a half jesting way, as though it were too small to take serious notice of, but the gipsy woman raised quite a scream at the mention of it.

"'Arf-a-crown! for that?"

"Well, my good woman, why not go to the poor doctor if you cannot afford a fee?"

She fumbled in her pocket, craning awkwardly to keep her grip upon the baby.

"Here's sevenpence," she said at last, holding out a little pile of copper coins. "I'll give you that and a wicker footstool."

"But my fee is half-a-crown."

The doctor's views of the glory of his profession cried out against this wretched haggling, and yet what was he to do?

"Where am I to get 'arf-a-crown? It is well for gentle-folk like you, who sit in your grand houses, an' can eat an' drink what you like, an' charge 'arf-a-crown for just saying as much as 'Ow

## A FALSE START

d'ye do.' We can't pick up 'arf-crowns like that. What we gets we earns 'ard. This sevenpence is just all I've got. You told me to feed the child light. She must feed light, for what she's to have is more than I know."

Whilst the woman had been speaking, Dr. Horace Wilkinson's eyes had wandered to the tiny heap of money upon the table which represented all that separated him from absolute starvation, and he chuckled to himself at the grim joke that he should appear to this poor woman to be a being living in the lap of luxury. Then he picked up the odd coppers, leaving only the two half-crowns upon the table.

"Here you are," he said brusquely. "Never mind the fee; and take these coppers. They may be of some use to you. Good-bye!"

He bowed her out, and closed the door behind her. After all, she was the thin edge of the wedge. These wandering people have great powers of recommendation. All large practices have been built up from such foundations. The hangers-on to the kitchen recommend to the kitchen, they to the drawing-room, and so it spreads. At least he could say now that he had had a patient.

He went into the back room and lit the spirit kettle to boil the water for his tea, laughing the while at the recollection of his recent interview. If all patients were like this one it could easily be reckoned how many it would take to ruin him completely. Putting aside the dirt upon his carpet and the loss of time, there were twopence gone upon the bandage, fourpence or more upon the medicine, to say nothing of phial, cork, label and paper. Then he had given her fivepence, so that his first

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patient had absorbed altogether not less than one-sixth of his available capital. If five more were to come he would be a broken man. He sat down upon the portmanteau and shook with laughter at the thought, while he measured out his one spoonful and a half of tea at 1s. 8d. into the brown earthenware teapot. Suddenly, however, the laugh faded from his face, and he cocked his ear toward the door, standing listening with a slanting head and a sidelong eye. There had been a rasping of wheels against the curb, the sound of steps outside, and then a loud peal at the bell. With his teaspoon in his hand he peeped round the corner and saw with amazement that a carriage and pair were waiting outside, and that a powdered footman was standing at the door. The spoon tinkled down upon the floor, and he stood gazing in bewilderment. Then, pulling himself together, he threw open the door.

"Young man," said the flunkey, "tell your master, Dr. Wilkinson, that he is wanted just as quick as ever he can come to Lady Millbank, at The Towers. He is to come this very instant. We'd take him with us, but we have to go back to see if Dr. Mason is home yet. Just you stir your stumps and give him the message."

The footman nodded and was off in an instant, while the coachman lashed his horses, and the carriage flew down the street.

Here was a new development! Dr. Horace Wilkinson stood at his door and tried to think it all out. Lady Millbank, of The Towers! People of wealth and position, no doubt. And a serious case, or why this haste and summoning of two doctors? But then, why in the name of all that is wonderful should he be sent for?

## A FALSE START

He was obscure, unknown, without influence. There must be some mistake. Yes, that must be the true explanation; or was it possible that someone was attempting a cruel hoax upon him. At any rate, it was too positive a message to be disregarded. He must set off at once and settle the matter one way or the other.

But he had one source of information. At the corner of the street was a small shop where one of the oldest inhabitants dispensed newspapers and gossip. He could get information there if anywhere. He put on his well-brushed top hat, secreted instruments and bandages in all his pockets, and without waiting for his tea, closed up his establishment and started off upon his adventure.

The stationer at the corner was a human directory to everyone and everything in Sutton, so that he soon had all the information which he wanted. Sir John Millbank was very well known in the town, it seemed. He was a merchant prince, an exporter of pens, three times mayor, and reported to be fully worth two millions sterling.

The Towers was his palatial seat, just outside the city. His wife had been an invalid for some years, and was growing worse. So far the whole thing seemed to be genuine enough. By some amazing chance these people really had sent for him.

And then another doubt assailed him, and he turned back into the shop.

"I am your neighbour, Dr. Horace Wilkinson," said he. "Is there any other medical man of that name in the town?"

No. The stationer was quite positive that there was not.

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That was final, then. A great good fortune had come in his way, and he must take prompt advantage of it. He called a cab, and drove furiously to The Towers, with his brain in a whirl, giddy with hope and delight at one moment, and sickened with fears and doubts at the next, lest the case should in some way be beyond his powers, or lest he should find at some critical moment that he was without the instrument or appliance which was needed. Every strange and *outré* case of which he had ever heard or read came back into his mind, and long before he reached The Towers he had worked himself into a positive conviction that he would be instantly required to do a trephining at the least.

The Towers was a very large house, standing back amid trees, at the head of a winding drive. As he drove up, the doctor sprang out, paid away half his worldly assets as a fare, and followed a stately footman who, having taken his name, led him through the oak-panelled, stained-glass hall, gorgeous with deers' heads and ancient armour, and ushered him into a large sitting-room beyond. A very irritable-looking, acid-faced man was seated in an arm-chair by the fireplace, while two young ladies in white were standing together in the bow window at the further end.

"Hullo! hullo! hullo! What's this—heh?" cried the irritable man. "Are you Dr. Wilkin-son? Eh?"

"Yes, sir. I am Dr. Wilkinson."

"Really, now. You seem very young—much younger than I expected. Well, well, well, Mason's old, and yet he don't seem to know much about it. I suppose we must try the other end

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now. You're the Wilkinson who wrote something about the lungs? Heh?"

Here was a light! The only two letters which the doctor had ever written to *The Lancet*—modest little letters thrust away in a back column among the wrangles about medical ethics, and the inquiries as to how much it took to keep a horse in the country—had been upon pulmonary disease. They had not been wasted, then. Some eye had picked them out and marked the name of the writer. Who could say that work was ever wasted, or that merit did not promptly meet with its reward?

"Yes, I have written on the subject."

"Ha! Well, then, where's Mason?"

"I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"No? That's queer, too. He knows you, and thinks a lot of your opinion. You're a stranger in the town, are you not?"

"Yes. I have only been here a very short time."

"That was what Mason said. He didn't give me the address. Said he would call on you and bring you, but when the wife got worse, of course I inquired for you and sent for you direct. I sent for Mason, too, but he was out. However, we can't wait for him, so just run away upstairs and do what you can."

"Well, I am placed in a rather delicate position," said Dr. Horace Wilkinson, with some hesitation. "I am here, as I understand, to meet my colleague, Dr. Mason, in consultation. It would perhaps hardly be correct for me to see the patient in his absence. I think that I would rather wait."

"Would you, by Jove! Do you think I'll let

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

my wife get worse while the doctor is coolly kicking his heels in the room below? No, sir, I am a plain man, and I tell you that you will either go up or go out."

The style of speech jarred upon the doctor's sense of the fitness of things, but still when a man's wife is ill much may be overlooked. He contented himself by bowing somewhat stiffly.

"I shall go up if you insist upon it," said he.

"I do insist upon it. And another thing; I won't have her thumped about all over the chest, or any hocus-pocus of the sort. She has bronchitis and asthma, and that's all. If you can cure it, well and good. But it only weakens her to have you tapping and listening; and it does no good, either."

Personal disrespect was a thing which the doctor could stand, but the profession was to him a holy thing, and a flippant word about it cut him to the quick.

"Thank you," said he, picking up his hat, "I have the honour to wish you a very good day. I do not care to undertake the responsibility of this case."

"Hullo, what's the matter now?"

"It is not my habit to give opinions without examining my patient. I wonder that you should suggest such a course to a medical man. I wish you good day."

But Sir John Millbank was a commercial man, and believed in the commercial principle that the more difficult a thing is to attain the more valuable it is. A doctor's opinion had been to him a mere matter of guineas. But here was a young man who seemed to care nothing either for his wealth



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or title. His respect for his judgment increased amazingly.

"Tut! tut!" said he, "Mason is not so thin-skinned. There! there! Have your way! Do what you like and I won't say another word. I'll just run upstairs and tell Lady Millbank that you are coming."

The door had hardly closed behind him when the two demure young ladies darted out of their corner, and fluttered with joy in front of the astonished doctor.

"Oh! well done, well done!" cried the taller, clapping her hands.

"Don't let him bully you, doctor," said the other. "Oh, it was so nice to hear you stand up to him. That's the way he does with poor Dr. Mason. Dr. Mason has never examined mamma yet. He always takes papa's word for everything. Hush, Maude, here he comes again."

They subsided in an instant into their corner, as silent and demure as ever.

Dr. Horace Wilkinson followed Sir John up the broad, thick-carpeted staircase, and into the darkened sick-room. In a quarter of an hour he had sounded and sifted the case to the uttermost, and descended with the husband once more to the drawing-room. In front of the fireplace were standing two gentlemen, the one a very typical, clean-shaven, general practitioner, the other a striking-looking man of middle age, with pale blue eyes and a long red beard.

"Hullo, Mason! You've come at last!"

"Yes, Sir John! And I have brought, as I promised, Dr. Wilkinson with me."

"Dr. Wilkinson! Why, this is he."

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

Dr. Mason stared in astonishment.

"I have never seen the gentleman before," he cried.

"Nevertheless, I am Dr. Wilkinson—Dr. Horace Wilkinson, of 114 Canal View."

"Good gracious, Sir John!" cried Dr. Mason. "Did you think that in a case of such importance I should call in a junior local practitioner? This is Dr. Adam Wilkinson, lecturer on pulmonary diseases at Regent's College, London, physician upon the staff of the St. Swithin's Hospital, and author of a dozen works upon the subject. He happened to be in Sutton upon a visit, and I thought I would utilise his presence to have a first-rate opinion upon Lady Millbank."

"Thank you," said Sir John drily. "But I fear my wife is rather tired now, for she has just been very thoroughly examined by this young gentleman. I think we will let it stop at that for the present, though, of course, as you have had the trouble of coming here, I should be glad to have a note of your fees."

When Dr. Mason had departed, looking very disgusted, and his friend the specialist very amused, Sir John listened to all the young physician had to say about the case.

"Now, I'll tell you what," said he, when he had finished. "I'm a man of my word, d'ye see? When I like a man I freeze to him. I'm a good friend and a bad enemy. I believe in you, and I don't believe in Mason. From now on you are my doctor, and that of my family. Come and see my wife every day. How does that suit your book?"

"I am extremely grateful to you for your kind

## A FALSE START

intentions toward me, but I am afraid there is no possible way in which I can avail myself of them."

"Heh! What d'ye mean?"

"I could not possibly take Dr. Mason's place in the middle of a case like this. It would be a most unprofessional act."

"Oh, well, go your own way," cried Sir John in despair. "Never was such a man for making difficulties. You've had a fair offer and you've refused it, and now you can just go your own way."

The millionaire stumped out of the room in a huff, and Dr. Horace Wilkinson made his way homeward to his spirit lamp and his one-and-eight-penny tea, with his first guinea in his pocket, and with a feeling that he had upheld the best traditions of his profession.

And yet this false start of his was a true start also, for it soon came to Dr. Mason's ears that his junior had had it in his power to carry off his best patient and had forbore to do so. To the honour of the profession be it said that such forbearance is the rule rather than the exception, and yet in this case, with so very junior a practitioner and so very wealthy a patient, the temptation was greater than is usual. There was a grateful note, a visit, a friendship, and now the well-known firm of Mason & Wilkinson is doing the largest family practice in Sutton.

## THE CURSE OF EVE

ROBERT JOHNSON was an essentially common-place man, with no feature to distinguish him from a million others. He was pale of face, ordinary in looks, neutral in opinions, thirty years of age, and a married man. By trade he was a gentleman's outfitter in the New North Road, and the competition of business squeezed out of him the little character that was left. In his hope of conciliating customers he had become cringing and pliable, until working ever in the same routine from day to day he seemed to have sunk into a soulless machine rather than a man. No great question had ever stirred him. At the end of this snug century, self-contained in his own narrow circle, it seemed impossible that any of the mighty, primitive passions of mankind could ever reach him. Yet birth, and lust, and illness, and death are changeless things, and when one of these harsh facts springs out upon a man at some sudden turn of the path of life, it dashes off for the moment his mask of civilisation and gives a glimpse of the stranger and stronger face below.

Johnson's wife was a quiet little woman, with brown hair and gentle ways. His affection for her was the one positive trait in his character. Together they would lay out the shop window every Monday morning, the spotless shirts in their green cardboard boxes below, the neckties above hung in rows over the brass rails, the cheap studs glistening

## THE CURSE OF EVE

from the white cards at either side, while in the background were the rows of cloth caps and the bank of boxes in which the more valuable hats were screened from the sunlight. She kept the books and sent out the bills. No one but she knew the joys and sorrows which crept into his small life. She had shared his exultation when the gentleman who was going to India had bought ten dozen shirts and an incredible number of collars, and she had been as stricken as he when, after the goods had gone, the bill was returned from the hotel address with the intimation that no such person had lodged there. For five years they had worked, building up the business, thrown together all the more closely because their marriage had been a childless one. Now, however, there were signs that a change was at hand, and that speedily. She was unable to come downstairs, and her mother, Mrs. Peyton, came over from Camberwell to nurse her and to welcome her grandchild.

Little qualms of anxiety came over Johnson as his wife's time approached. However, after all, it was a natural process. Other men's wives went through it unharmed, and why should not his? He was himself one of a family of fourteen, and yet his mother was alive and hearty. It was quite the exception for anything to go wrong. And yet in spite of his reasonings the remembrance of his wife's condition was always like a sombre background to all his other thoughts.

Dr. Miles of Bridport Place, the best man in the neighbourhood, was retained five months in advance, and, as time stole on, many little packets of absurdly small white garments with frill work and ribbons began to arrive among the big con-

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

signments of male necessities. And then one evening, as Johnson was ticketing the scarfs in the shop, he heard a bustle upstairs, and Mrs. Peyton came running down to say that Lucy was bad and that she thought the doctor ought to be there without delay.

It was not Robert Johnson's nature to hurry. He was prim and staid and liked to do things in an orderly fashion. It was a quarter of a mile from the corner of the New North Road where his shop stood to the doctor's house in Bridport Place. There were no cabs in sight, so he set off upon foot, leaving the lad to mind the shop. At Bridport Place he was told that the doctor had just gone to Harman Street to attend a man in a fit. Johnson started off for Harman Street, losing a little of his primness as he became more anxious. Two full cabs but no empty ones passed him on the way. At Harman Street he learned that the doctor had gone on to a case of measles, fortunately he had left the address—69 Dunstan Road, at the other side of the Regent's Canal. Johnson's primness had vanished now as he thought of the women waiting at home, and he began to run as hard as he could down the Kingsland Road. Some way along he sprang into a cab which stood by the curb and drove to Dunstan Road. The doctor had just left, and Robert Johnson felt inclined to sit down upon the steps in despair.

Fortunately he had not sent the cab away, and he was soon back at Bridport Place. Dr. Miles had not returned yet, but they were expecting him every instant. Johnson waited, drumming his fingers on his knees, in a high, dim lit room, the air of which was charged with a faint, sickly smell

## THE CURSE OF EVE

of ether. The furniture was massive, and the books in the shelves were sombre, and a squat black clock ticked mournfully on the mantelpiece. It told him that it was half-past seven, and that he had been gone an hour and a quarter. Whatever would the women think of him! Every time that a distant door slammed he sprang from his chair in a quiver of eagerness. His ears strained to catch the deep notes of the doctor's voice. And then, suddenly, with a gush of joy he heard a quick step outside, and the sharp click of the key in the lock. In an instant he was out in the hall, before the doctor's foot was over the threshold.

"If you please, doctor, I've come for you," he cried; "the wife was taken bad at six o'clock."

He hardly knew what he expected the doctor to do. Something very energetic, certainly—to seize some drugs, perhaps, and rush excitedly with him through the gaslit streets. Instead of that Dr. Miles threw his umbrella into the rack, jerked off his hat with a somewhat peevish gesture, and pushed Johnson back into the room.

"Let's see! You *did* engage me, didn't you?" he asked in no very cordial voice.

"Oh, yes, doctor, last November. Johnson, the outfitter, you know, in the New North Road."

"Yes, yes. It's a bit overdue," said the doctor, glancing at a list of names in a note-book with a very shiny cover. "Well, how is she?"

"I don't——"

"Ah, of course, it's your first. You'll know more about it next time."

"Mrs. Peyton said it was time you were there, sir."

"My dear sir, there can be no very pressing hurry

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in a first case. We shall have an all-night affair, I fancy. You can't get an engine to go without coals, Mr. Johnson, and I have had nothing but a light lunch."

"We could have something cooked for you—something hot and a cup of tea."

"Thank you, but I fancy my dinner is actually on the table. I can do no good in the earlier stages. Go home and say that I am coming, and I will be round immediately afterward."

A sort of horror filled Robert Johnson as he gazed at this man who could think about his dinner at such a moment. He had not imagination enough to realise that the experience which seemed so appallingly important to him, was the merest everyday matter of business to the medical man, who could not have lived for a year had he not, amid the rush of work, remembered what was due to his own health. To Johnson he seemed little better than a monster. His thoughts were bitter as he sped back to his shop.

"You've taken your time," said his mother-in-law reproachfully, looking down the stairs as he entered.

"I couldn't help it!" he gasped. "Is it over?"

"Over! She's got to be worse, poor dear, before she can be better. Where's Dr. Miles?"

"He's coming after he's had dinner."

The old woman was about to make some reply, when, from the half-opened door behind, a high, whinnying voice cried out for her. She ran back and closed the door, while Johnson, sick at heart, turned into the shop. There he sent the lad home and busied himself frantically in putting up shutters and turning out boxes. When all was closed



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and finished he seated himself in the parlour behind the shop. But he could not sit still. He rose incessantly to walk a few paces and then fall back into a chair once more. Suddenly the clatter of china fell upon his ear, and he saw the maid pass the door with a cup on a tray and a smoking teapot.

"Who is that for, Jane?" he asked.

"For the mistress, Mr. Johnson. She says she would fancy it."

There was immeasurable consolation to him in that homely cup of tea. It wasn't so very bad after all if his wife could think of such things. So light-hearted was he that he asked for a cup also. He had just finished it when the doctor arrived, with a small black leather bag in his hand.

"Well, how is she?" he asked genially.

"Oh, she's very much better," said Johnson, with enthusiasm.

"Dear me, that's bad!" said the doctor. "Perhaps it will do if I look in on my morning round?"

"No, no," cried Johnson, clutching at his thick frieze overcoat. "We are so glad that you have come. And, doctor, please come down soon and let me know what you think about it."

The doctor passed upstairs, his firm, heavy steps resounding through the house. Johnson could hear his boots creaking as he walked about the floor above him, and the sound was a consolation to him. It was crisp and decided, the tread of a man who had plenty of self-confidence. Presently, still straining his ears to catch what was going on, he heard the scraping of a chair as it was drawn along the floor, and a moment later he heard the door fly open and someone came rushing down-

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stairs. Johnson sprang up with his hair bristling, thinking that some dreadful thing had occurred, but it was only his mother-in-law, incoherent with excitement and searching for scissors and some tape. She vanished again and Jane passed up the stairs with a pile of newly-aired linen. Then, after an interval of silence, Johnson heard the heavy, creaking tread and the doctor came down into the parlour.

"That's better," said he, pausing with his hand upon the door. "You look pale, Mr. Johnson."

"Oh no, sir, not at all," he answered deprecatingly, mopping his brow with his handkerchief.

"There is no immediate cause for alarm," said Dr. Miles. "The case is not all that we could wish it. Still we will hope for the best."

"Is there danger, sir?" gasped Johnson.

"Well, there is always danger, of course. It is not altogether a favourable case, but still it might be much worse. I have given her a draught. I saw as I passed that they have been doing a little building opposite to you. It's an improving quarter. The rents go higher and higher. You have a lease of your own little place, eh?"

"Yes, sir, yes!" cried Johnson, whose ears were straining for every sound from above, and who felt none the less that it was very soothing that the doctor should be able to chat so easily at such a time. "That's to say no, sir, I am a yearly tenant."

"Ah, I should get a lease if I were you. There's Marshall, the watchmaker, down the street, I attended his wife twice and saw him through the typhoid when they took up the drains in Prince Street. I assure you his landlord sprung his rent nearly forty a year and he had to pay or clear out."

## THE CURSE OF EVE

"Did his wife get through it, doctor?"

"Oh yes, she did very well. Hullo! Hullo!"

He slanted his ear to the ceiling with a questioning face, and then darted swiftly from the room.

It was March and the evenings were chill, so Jane had lit the fire, but the wind drove the smoke downward and the air was full of its acrid taint. Johnson felt chilled to the bone, though rather by his apprehensions than by the weather. He crouched over the fire with his thin white hands held out to the blaze. At ten o'clock Jane brought in the joint of cold meat and laid his place for supper, but he could not bring himself to touch it. He drank a glass of the beer, however, and felt the better for it. The tension of his nerves seemed to have reacted upon his hearing, and he was able to follow the most trivial things in the room above. Once, when the beer was still heartening him, he nerved himself to creep on tiptoe up the stair and to listen to what was going on. The bedroom door was half an inch open, and through the slit he could catch a glimpse of the clean-shaven face of the doctor, looking wearier and more anxious than before. Then he rushed downstairs like a lunatic, and running to the door he tried to distract his thoughts by watching what was going on in the street. The shops were all shut, and some rollicking boon companions came shouting along from the public-house. He stayed at the door until the stragglers had thinned down, and then came back to his seat by the fire. In his dim brain he was asking himself questions which had never intruded themselves before. Where was the justice of it? What had his sweet, innocent little wife done that she should be used so? Why was nature so cruel? He was fright-

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ened at his own thoughts, and yet wondered that they had never occurred to him before.

As the early morning drew in, Johnson, sick at heart and shivering in every limb, sat with his great-coat huddled round him, staring at the grey ashes and waiting hopelessly for some relief. His face was white and clammy, and his nerves had been numbed into a half conscious state by the long monotony of misery. But suddenly all his feelings leapt into keen life again as he heard the bedroom door open and the doctor's steps upon the stair. Robert Johnson was precise and unemotional in every-day life, but he almost shrieked now as he rushed forward to know if it were over.

One glance at the stern, drawn face which met him showed that it was no pleasant news which had sent the doctor downstairs. His appearance had altered as much as Johnson's during the last few hours. His hair was on end, his face flushed, his forehead dotted with beads of perspiration. There was a peculiar fierceness in his eye, and about the lines of his mouth, a fighting look as befitted a man who for hours on end had been striving with the hungriest of foes for the most precious of prizes. But there was a sadness too, as though his grim opponent had been overmastering him. He sat down and leaned his head upon his hand like a man who is fagged out.

"I thought it my duty to see you, Mr. Johnson, and to tell you that it is a very nasty case. Your wife's heart is not strong, and she has some symptoms which I do not like. What I wanted to say is that if you would like to have a second opinion I shall be very glad to meet anyone whom you might suggest."

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Johnson was so dazed by his want of sleep and the evil news that he could hardly grasp the doctor's meaning. The other, seeing him hesitate, thought that he was considering the expense.

"Smith or Hawley would come for two guineas," said he. "But I think Pritchard of the City Road is the best man."

"Oh, yes, bring the best man," cried Johnson.

"Pritchard would want three guineas. He is a senior man, you see."

"I'd give him all I have if he would pull her through. Shall I run for him?"

"Yes. Go to my house first and ask for the green baize bag. The assistant will give it to you. Tell him I want the A.C.E. mixture. Her heart is too weak for chloroform. Then go for Pritchard and bring him back with you."

It was heavenly for Johnson to have something to do and to feel that he was of some use to his wife. He ran swiftly to Bridport Place, his footfalls clattering through the silent streets, and the big dark policemen turning their yellow funnels of light on him as he passed. Two tugs at the night-bell brought down a sleepy, half-clad assistant, who handed him a stoppered glass bottle and a cloth bag which contained something which clinked when you moved it. Johnson thrust the bottle into his pocket, seized the green bag, and pressing his hat firmly down ran as hard as he could set foot to ground until he was in the City Road and saw the name of Pritchard engraved in white upon a red ground. He bounded in triumph up the three steps which led to the door, and as he did so there was a crash behind him. His precious bottle was in fragments upon the pavement.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

For a moment he felt as if it were his wife's body that was lying there. But the run had freshened his wits and he saw that the mischief might be repaired. He pulled vigorously at the night-bell.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked a gruff voice at his elbow. He started back and looked up at the windows, but there was no sign of life. He was approaching the bell again with the intention of pulling it, when a perfect roar burst from the wall.

"I can't stand shivering here all night," cried the voice. "Say who you are and what you want or I shut the tube."

Then for the first time Johnson saw that the end of a speaking tube hung out of the wall just above the bell. He shouted up it,—

"I want you to come with me to meet Dr. Miles at a confinement at once."

"How far?" shrieked the irascible voice.

"The New North Road, Hoxton."

"My consultation fee is three guineas, payable at the time."

"All right," shouted Johnson. "You are to bring a bottle of A.C.E. mixture with you."

"All right! Wait a bit!"

Five minutes later an elderly, hard-faced man with grizzled hair flung open the door. As he emerged a voice from somewhere in the shadows cried,—

"Mind you take your cravat, John," and he impatiently growled something over his shoulder in reply.

The consultant was a man who had been hardened by a life of ceaseless labour, and who had been driven, as so many others have been, by the needs

## THE CURSE OF EVE

of his own increasing family to set the commercial before the philanthropic side of his profession. Yet beneath his rough crust he was a man with a kindly heart.

"We don't want to break a record," said he, pulling up and panting after attempting to keep up with Johnson for five minutes. "I would go quicker if I could, my dear sir, and I quite sympathise with your anxiety, but really I can't manage it."

So Johnson, on fire with impatience, had to slow down until they reached the New North Road, when he ran ahead and had the door open for the doctor when he came. He heard the two meet outside the bedroom, and caught scraps of their conversation, "Sorry to knock you up—nasty case—decent people." Then it sank into a mumble and the door closed behind them.

Johnson sat up in his chair now, listening keenly, for he knew that a crisis must be at hand. He heard the two doctors moving about, and was able to distinguish the step of Pritchard, which had a drag in it, from the clean, crisp sound of the other's footfall. There was silence for a few minutes and then a curious drunken, mumbling sing-song voice came quavering up, very unlike anything which he had heard hitherto. At the same time a sweetish, insidious scent, imperceptible perhaps to any nerves less strained than his, crept down the stairs and penetrated into the room. The voice dwindled into a mere drone and finally sank away into silence, and Johnson gave a long sigh of relief, for he knew that the drug had done its work and that, come what might, there should be no more pain for the sufferer.

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But soon the silence became even more trying to him than the cries had been. He had no clew now as to what was going on, and his mind swarmed with horrible possibilities. He rose and went to the bottom of the stairs again. He heard the clink of metal against metal, and the subdued murmur of the doctors' voices. Then he heard Mrs. Peyton say something, in a tone as of fear or expostulation, and again the doctors murmured together. For twenty minutes he stood there leaning against the wall, listening to the occasional rumbles of talk without being able to catch a word of it. And then of a sudden there rose out of the silence the strangest little piping cry, and Mrs. Peyton screamed out in her delight and the man ran into the parlour and flung himself down upon the horse-hair sofa, drumming his heels on it in his ecstasy.

But often the great cat Fate lets us go, only to clutch us again in a fiercer grip. As minute after minute passed and still no sound came from above save those thin, glutinous cries, Johnson cooled from his frenzy of joy, and lay breathless with his ears straining. They were moving slowly about. They were talking in subdued tones. Still minute after minute passing, and no word from the voice for which he listened. His nerves were dulled by his night of trouble, and he waited in limp wretchedness upon his sofa. There he still sat when the doctors came down to him—a bedraggled, miserable figure with his face grimy and his hair unkempt from his long vigil. He rose as they entered, bracing himself against the mantelpiece.

"Is she dead?" he asked.

"Doing well," answered the doctor.



## THE CURSE OF EVE

And at the words that little conventional spirit which had never known until that night the capacity for fierce agony which lay within it, learned for the second time that there were springs of joy also which it had never tapped before. His impulse was to fall upon his knees, but he was shy before the doctors.

"Can I go up?"

"In a few minutes."

"I'm sure, doctor, I'm very—I'm very—" he grew inarticulate. "Here are your three guineas, Dr. Pritchard. I wish they were three hundred."

"So do I," said the senior man, and they laughed as they shook hands.

Johnson opened the shop door for them and heard their talk as they stood for an instant outside.

"Looked nasty at one time."

"Very glad to have your help."

"Delighted, I'm sure. Won't you step round and have a cup of coffee?"

"No, thanks. I'm expecting another case."

The firm step and the dragging one passed away to the right and the left. Johnson turned from the door still with that turmoil of joy in his heart. He seemed to be making a new start in life. He felt that he was a stronger and a deeper man. Perhaps all this suffering had an object then. It might prove to be a blessing both to his wife and to him. The very thought was one which he would have been incapable of conceiving twelve hours before. He was full of new emotions. If there had been a harrowing there had been a planting too.

"Can I come up?" he cried, and then, without

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

waiting for an answer, he took the steps three at a time.

Mrs. Peyton was standing by a soapy bath with a bundle in her hands. From under the curve of a brown shawl there looked out at him the strangest little red face with crumpled features, moist, loose lips, and eyelids which quivered like a rabbit's nostrils. The weak neck had let the head topple over, and it rested upon the shoulder.

"Kiss it, Robert!" cried the grandmother. "Kiss your son!"

But he felt a resentment to the little, red, blinking creature. He could not forgive it yet for that long night of misery. He caught sight of a white face in the bed and he ran toward it with such love and pity as his speech could find no words for.

"Thank God it is over! Lucy, dear, it was dreadful!"

"But I'm so happy now. I never was so happy in my life."

Her eyes were fixed upon the brown bundle.

"You mustn't talk," said Mrs. Peyton.

"But don't leave me," whispered his wife.

So he sat in silence with his hand in hers. The lamp was burning dim and the first cold light of dawn was breaking through the window. The night had been long and dark, but the day was the sweeter and the purer in consequence. London was waking up. The roar began to rise from the street. Lives had come and lives had gone, but the great machine was still working out its dim and tragic destiny.

## SWEETHEARTS

It is hard for the general practitioner who sits among his patients both morning and evening, and sees them in their homes between, to steal time for one little daily breath of cleanly air. To win it he must slip early from his bed and walk out between shuttered shops when it is chill but very clear, and all things are sharply outlined, as in a frost. It is an hour that has a charm of its own, when, but for a postman or a milkman, one has the pavement to oneself, and even the most common thing takes an ever-recurring freshness, as though causeway, and lamp, and signboard had all wakened to the new day. Then even an inland city may seem beautiful, and bear virtue in its smoke-tainted air.

But it was by the sea that I lived, in a town that was unlovely enough were it not for its glorious neighbour. And who cares for the town when one can sit on the bench at the headland, and look out over the huge blue bay, and the yellow scimitar that curves before it. I loved it when its great face was freckled with the fishing boats, and I loved it when the big ships went past, far out, a little hillock of white and no hull, with topsails curved like a bodice, so stately and demure. But most of all I loved it when no trace of man marred the majesty of Nature, and when the sun-bursts slanted down on it from between the drifting rain-clouds. Then I have seen the further

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edge draped in the gauze of the driving rain, with its thin grey shading under the slow clouds, while my headland was golden, and the sun gleamed upon the breakers and struck deep through the green waves beyond, showing up the purple patches where the beds of seaweed are lying. Such a morning as that, with the wind in his hair, and the spray on his lips, and the cry of the eddying gulls in his ear, may send a man back braced afresh to the reek of a sick-room, and the dead, drab weariness of practice.

It was on such another day that I first saw my old man. He came to my bench just as I was leaving it. My eye must have picked him out even in a crowded street, for he was a man of large frame and fine presence, with something of distinction in the set of his lip and the poise of his head. He limped up the winding path leaning heavily upon his stick, as though those great shoulders had become too much at last for the failing limbs that bore them. As he approached, my eyes caught Nature's danger signal, that faint bluish tinge in nose and lip which tells of a labouring heart.

"The brae is a little trying, sir," said I. "Speaking as a physician, I should say that you would do well to rest here before you go further."

He inclined his head in a stately, old-world fashion, and seated himself upon the bench. Seeing that he had no wish to speak I was silent also, but I could not help watching him out of the corners of my eyes, for he was such a wonderful survival of the early half of the century, with his low-crowned, curly-brimmed hat, his black satin tie which fastened with a buckle at the back, and,

## SWEETHEARTS

above all, his large, fleshy, clean-shaven face shot with its mesh of wrinkles. Those eyes, ere they had grown dim, had looked out from the box-seat of mail coaches, and had seen the knots of navvies as they toiled on the brown embankments. Those lips had smiled over the first numbers of "Pickwick," and had gossiped of the promising young man who wrote them. The face itself was a seventy-year almanack, and every seam an entry upon it where public as well as private sorrow left its trace. That pucker on the forehead stood for the Mutiny, perhaps; that line of care for the Crimean winter, it may be; and that last little sheaf of wrinkles, as my fancy hoped, for the death of Gordon. And so, as I dreamed in my foolish way, the old gentleman with the shining stock was gone, and it was seventy years of a great nation's life that took shape before me on the headland in the morning.

But he soon brought me back to earth again. As he recovered his breath he took a letter out of his pocket, and, putting on a pair of horn-rimmed eye-glasses, he read it through very carefully. Without any design of playing the spy I could not help observing that it was in a woman's hand. When he had finished it he read it again, and then sat with the corners of his mouth drawn down and his eyes staring vacantly out over the bay, the most forlorn-looking old gentleman that ever I have seen. All that is kindly within me was set stirring by that wistful face, but I knew that he was in no humour for talk, and so, at last, with my breakfast and my patients calling me, I left him on the bench and started for home.

I never gave him another thought until the next

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morning, when, at the same hour, he turned up upon the headland, and shared the bench which I had been accustomed to look upon as my own. He bowed again before sitting down, but was no more inclined than formerly to enter into conversation. There had been a change in him during the last twenty-four hours, and all for the worse. The face seemed more heavy and more wrinkled, while that ominous venous tinge was more pronounced as he panted up the hill. The clean lines of his cheek and chin were marred by a day's growth of grey stubble, and his large, shapely head had lost something of the brave carriage which had struck me when first I glanced at him. He had a letter there, the same, or another, but still in a woman's hand, and over this he was moping and mumbling in his senile fashion, with his brow puckered, and the corners of his mouth drawn down like those of a fretting child. So I left him, with a vague wonder as to who he might be, and why a single spring day should have wrought such a change upon him.

So interested was I that next morning I was on the look-out for him. Sure enough, at the same hour, I saw him coming up the hill; but very slowly, with a bent back and a heavy head. It was shocking to me to see the change in him as he approached.

"I am afraid that our air does not agree with you, sir," I ventured to remark.

But it was as though he had no heart for talk. He tried, as I thought, to make some fitting reply, but it slurred off into a mumble and silence. How bent and weak and old he seemed—ten years older at the least than when first I had seen him! It

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went to my heart to see this fine old fellow wasting away before my eyes. There was the eternal letter which he unfolded with his shaking fingers. Who was this woman whose words moved him so? Some daughter, perhaps, or grand-daughter, who should have been the light of his home instead of— I smiled to find how bitter I was growing, and how swiftly I was weaving a romance round an unshaven old man and his correspondence. Yet all day he lingered in my mind, and I had fitful glimpses of those two trembling, blue-veined, knuckly hands with the paper rustling between them.

I had hardly hoped to see him again. Another day's decline must, I thought, hold him to his room, if not to his bed. Great, then, was my surprise when, as I approached my bench, I saw that he was already there. But as I came up to him I could scarce be sure that it was indeed the same man. There were the curly-brimmed hat, and the shining stock, and the horn glasses, but where were the stoop and the grey-stubbled, pitiable face? He was clean-shaven and firm lipped, with a bright eye and a head that poised itself upon his great shoulders like an eagle on a rock. His back was as straight and square as a grenadier's, and he switched at the pebbles with his stick in his exuberant vitality. In the button-hole of his well-brushed black coat there glinted a golden blossom, and the corner of a dainty red silk handkerchief lapped over from his breast-pocket. He might have been the eldest son of the weary creature who had sat there the morning before.

"Good-morning, sir, good-morning!" he cried with a merry waggle of his cane.

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"Good-morning!" I answered; "how beautiful the bay is looking."

"Yes, sir, but you should have seen it just before the sun rose."

"What, have you been here since then?"

"I was here when there was scarce light to see the path."

"You are a very early riser."

"On occasion, sir; on occasion!" He cocked his eye at me as if to gauge whether I were worthy of his confidence. "The fact is, sir, that my wife is coming back to me to-day."

I suppose that my face showed that I did not quite see the force of the explanation. My eyes, too, may have given him assurance of sympathy, for he moved quite close to me and began speaking in a low, confidential voice, as if the matter were of such weight that even the sea-gulls must be kept out of our councils.

"Are you a married man, sir?"

"No, I am not."

"Ah, then you cannot quite understand it. My wife and I have been married for nearly fifty years, and we have never been parted, never at all, until now."

"Was it for long?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. This is the fourth day. She had to go to Scotland. A matter of duty, you understand, and the doctors would not let me go. Not that I would have allowed them to stop me, but she was on their side. Now, thank God! it is over, and she may be here at any moment."

"Here!"

"Yes, here. This headland and bench were old friends of ours thirty years ago. The people with



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whom we stay are not, to tell the truth, very congenial, and we have little privacy among them. That is why we prefer to meet here. I could not be sure which train would bring her, but if she had come by the very earliest she would have found me waiting."

"In that case—" said I, rising.

"No, sir, no," he entreated, "I beg that you will stay. It does not weary you, this domestic talk of mine?"

"On the contrary."

"I have been so driven inward during these few last days! Ah, what a nightmare it has been! Perhaps it may seem strange to you that an old fellow like me should feel like this."

"It is charming."

"No credit to me, sir! There's not a man on this planet but would feel the same if he had the good fortune to be married to such a woman. Perhaps, because you see me like this, and hear me speak of our long life together, you conceive that she is old, too."

He laughed heartily, and his eyes twinkled at the humour of the idea.

"She's one of those women, you know, who have youth in their hearts, and so it can never be very far from their faces. To me she's just as she was when she first took my hand in hers in '45. A wee little bit stouter, perhaps, but then, if she had a fault as a girl, it was that she was a shade too slender. She was above me in station, you know—I a clerk, and she the daughter of my employer. Oh! it was quite a romance, I give you my word, and I won her; and, somehow, I have never got over the freshness and the wonder of it. To think that that

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sweet, lovely girl has walked by my side all through life, and that I have been able——”

He stopped suddenly, and I glanced round at him in surprise. He was shaking all over, in every fibre of his great body. His hands were clawing at the woodwork, and his feet shuffling on the gravel. I saw what it was. He was trying to rise, but was so excited that he could not. I half extended my hand, but a higher courtesy constrained me to draw it back again and turn my face to the sea. An instant afterward he was up and hurrying down the path.

A woman was coming toward us. She was quite close before he had seen her—thirty yards at the utmost. I know not if she had ever been as he described her, or whether it was but some ideal which he carried in his brain. The person upon whom I looked was tall, it is true, but she was thick and shapeless, with a ruddy, full-blown face, and a skirt grotesquely gathered up. There was a green ribbon in her hat, which jarred upon my eyes, and her blouse-like bodice was full and clumsy. And this was the lovely girl, the ever youthful! My heart sank as I thought how little such a woman might appreciate him, how unworthy she might be of his love.

She came up the path in her solid way, while he staggered along to meet her. Then, as they came together, looking discreetly out of the furthest corner of my eye, I saw that he put out both his hands, while she, shrinking from a public caress, took one of them in hers and shook it. As she did so I saw her face, and I was easy in my mind for my old man. God grant that when this hand is shaking, and when this back is bowed, a woman's eyes may look so into mine.

## A PHYSIOLOGIST'S WIFE

PROFESSOR AINSLIE GREY had not come down to breakfast at the usual hour. The presentation chiming-clock which stood between the terra-cotta busts of Claude Bernard and of John Hunter upon the dining-room mantelpiece had rung out the half-hour and the three-quarters. Now its golden hand was verging upon the nine, and yet there were no signs of the master of the house.

It was an unprecedented occurrence. During the twelve years that she had kept house for him, his younger sister had never known him a second behind his time. She sat now in front of the high silver coffee-pot, uncertain whether to order the gong to be resounded or to wait on in silence. Either course might be a mistake. Her brother was not a man who permitted mistakes.

Miss Ainslie Grey was rather above the middle height, thin, with peering, puckered eyes, and the rounded shoulders which mark the bookish woman. Her face was long and spare, flecked with colour above the cheek-bones, with a reasonable, thoughtful forehead, and a dash of absolute obstinacy in her thin lips and prominent chin. Snow-white cuffs and collar, with a plain dark dress, cut with almost quaker-like simplicity, bespoke the primness of her taste. An ebony cross hung over her flattened chest. She sat very upright in her chair, listening with raised eyebrows, and swinging her eye-glasses backward and forward with a nervous gesture which was peculiar to her.

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Suddenly she gave a sharp, satisfied jerk of the head, and began to pour out the coffee. From outside there came the dull thudding sound of heavy feet upon thick carpet. The door swung open, and the Professor entered with a quick, nervous step. He nodded to his sister, and seating himself at the other side of the table, began to open the small pile of letters which lay beside his plate.

Professor Ainslie Grey was at that time forty-three years of age—nearly twelve years older than his sister. His career had been a brilliant one. At Edinburgh, at Cambridge, and at Vienna he had laid the foundations of his great reputation, both in physiology and in zoology.

His pamphlet, "On the Mesoblastic Origin of Excitomotor Nerve Roots," had won him his fellowship of the Royal Society; and his researches, "Upon the Nature of Bathybius, with some Remarks upon Lithococci," had been translated into at least three European languages. He had been referred to by one of the greatest living authorities as being the very type and embodiment of all that was best in modern science. No wonder, then, that when the commercial city of Birchespool decided to create a medical school, they were only too glad to confer the chair of physiology upon Mr. Ainslie Grey. They valued him the more from the conviction that their class was only one step in his upward journey, and that the first vacancy would remove him to some more illustrious seat of learning.

In person he was not unlike his sister. The same eyes, the same contour, the same intellectual forehead. His lips, however, were firmer, and his long, thin lower jaw was sharper and more decided.

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He ran his finger and thumb down it from time to time, as he glanced over his letters.

"Those maids are very noisy," he remarked, as a clack of tongues sounded in the distance.

"It is Sarah," said his sister; "I shall speak about it."

She had handed over his coffee-cup, and was sipping at her own, glancing furtively through her narrowed lids at the austere face of her brother.

"The first great advance of the human race," said the Professor, "was when, by the development of their left frontal convolutions, they attained the power of speech. Their second advance was when they learned to control that power. Woman has not yet attained the second stage."

He half closed his eyes as he spoke, and thrust his chin forward, but as he ceased he had a trick of suddenly opening both eyes very wide and staring sternly at his interlocutor.

"I am not garrulous, John," said his sister.

"No, Ada; in many respects you approach the superior or male type."

The Professor bowed over his egg with the manner of one who utters a courtly compliment; but the lady pouted, and gave an impatient little shrug of her shoulders.

"You were late this morning, John," she remarked, after a pause.

"Yes, Ada; I slept badly. Some little cerebral congestion, no doubt due to over-stimulation of the centres of thought. I have been a little disturbed in my mind."

His sister stared across at him in astonishment. The Professor's mental processes had hitherto been as regular as his habits. Twelve years' continual

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intercourse had taught her that he lived in a serene and rarefied atmosphere of scientific calm, high above the petty emotions which affect humbler minds.

"You are surprised, Ada," he remarked. "Well, I cannot wonder at it. I should have been surprised myself if I had been told that I was so sensitive to vascular influences. For, after all, all disturbances are vascular if you probe them deep enough. I am thinking of getting married."

"Not Mrs. O'James?" cried Ada Grey, laying down her egg-spoon.

"My dear, you have the feminine quality of receptivity very remarkably developed. Mrs. O'James is the lady in question."

"But you know so little of her. The Esdailes themselves know so little. She is really only an acquaintance, although she is staying at The Lindens. Would it not be wise to speak to Mrs. Esdaile first, John?"

"I do not think, Ada, that Mrs. Esdaile is at all likely to say anything which would materially affect my course of action. I have given the matter due consideration. The scientific mind is slow at arriving at conclusions, but having once formed them, it is not prone to change. Matrimony is the natural condition of the human race. I have, as you know, been so engaged in academical and other work, that I have had no time to devote to merely personal questions. It is different now, and I see no valid reason why I should forego this opportunity of seeking a suitable helpmate."

"And you are engaged?"

"Hardly that, Ada. I ventured yesterday to indicate to the lady that I was prepared to submit

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to the common lot of humanity. I shall wait upon her after my morning lecture, and learn how far my proposals meet with her acquiescence. But you frown, Ada!"

His sister started, and made an effort to conceal her expression of annoyance. She even stammered out some few words of congratulation, but a vacant look had come into her brother's eyes, and he was evidently not listening to her.

"I am sure, John," she said, "that I wish you the happiness which you deserve. If I hesitated at all, it is because I know how much is at stake, and because the thing is so sudden, so unexpected." Her thin white hand stole up to the black cross upon her bosom. "These are moments when we need guidance, John. If I could persuade you to turn to spiritual——"

The Professor waved the suggestion away with a deprecating hand.

"It is useless to reopen that question," he said. "We cannot argue upon it. You assume more than I can grant. I am forced to dispute your premises. We have no common basis."

His sister sighed.

"You have no faith," she said.

"I have faith in those great evolutionary forces which are leading the human race to some unknown but elevated goal."

"You believe in nothing."

"On the contrary, my dear Ada, I believe in the differentiation of protoplasm."

She shook her head sadly. It was the one subject upon which she ventured to dispute her brother's infallibility.

"This is rather beside the question," remarked

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the Professor, folding up his napkin. "If I am not mistaken, there is some possibility of another matrimonial event occurring in the family. Eh, Ada? What!"

His small eyes glittered with sly facetiousness as he shot a twinkle at his sister. She sat very stiff, and traced patterns upon the cloth with the sugar-tongs.

"Dr. James M'Murdo O'Brien—" said the Professor, sonorously.

"Don't, John, don't!" cried Miss Ainslie Grey.

"Dr. James M'Murdo O'Brien," continued her brother inexorably, "is a man who has already made his mark upon the science of the day. He is my first and my most distinguished pupil. I assure you, Ada, that his 'Remarks upon the Bile-Pigments, with special reference to Urobilin,' is likely to live as a classic. It is not too much to say that he has revolutionised our views about urobilin."

He paused, but his sister sat silent, with bent head and flushed cheeks. The little ebony cross rose and fell with her hurried breathings.

"Dr. James M'Murdo O'Brien has, as you know, the offer of the physiological chair at Melbourne. He has been in Australia five years, and has a brilliant future before him. To-day he leaves us for Edinburgh, and in two months' time he goes out to take over his new duties. You know his feeling toward you. It rests with you as to whether he goes out alone. Speaking for myself, I cannot imagine any higher mission for a woman of culture than to go through life in the company of a man who is capable of such a research as that which Dr. James M'Murdo O'Brien has brought to a successful conclusion."



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"He has not spoken to me," murmured the lady.

"Ah, there are signs which are more subtle than speech," said her brother, wagging his head. "But you are pale. Your vasomotor system is excited. Your arterioles have contracted. Let me entreat you to compose yourself. I think I hear the carriage. I fancy that you may have a visitor this morning, Ada. You will excuse me now."

With a quick glance at the clock he strode off into the hall, and within a few minutes he was rattling in his quiet, well-appointed brougham through the brick-lined streets of Birchespool.

His lecture over, Professor Ainslie Grey paid a visit to his laboratory, where he adjusted several scientific instruments, made a note as to the progress of three separate infusions of bacteria, cut half-a-dozen sections with a microtome, and finally resolved the difficulties of seven different gentlemen, who were pursuing researches in as many separate lines of inquiry. Having thus conscientiously and methodically completed the routine of his duties, he returned to his carriage and ordered the coachman to drive him to The Lindens. His face as he drove was cold and impassive, but he drew his fingers from time to time down his prominent chin with a jerky, twitchy movement.

The Lindens was an old-fashioned, ivy-clad house which had once been in the country, but was now caught in the long, red-brick feelers of the growing city. It still stood back from the road in the privacy of its own grounds. A winding path, lined with laurel bushes, led to the arched and porticoed entrance. To the right was a lawn, and at the far side, under the shadow of a hawthorn, a lady sat in

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a garden-chair with a book in her hands. At the click of the gate she started, and the Professor, catching sight of her, turned away from the door, and strode in her direction.

"What! won't you go in and see Mrs. Esdaile?" she asked, sweeping out from under the shadow of the hawthorn.

She was a small woman, strongly feminine, from the rich coils of her light-coloured hair to the dainty garden slipper which peeped from under her cream-tinted dress. One tiny well-gloved hand was outstretched in greeting, while the other pressed a thick, green-covered volume against her side. Her decision and quick, tactful manner bespoke the mature woman of the world; but her upraised face had preserved a girlish and even infantile expression of innocence in its large, fearless, grey eyes, and sensitive, humorous mouth. Mrs. O'James was a widow, and she was two-and-thirty years of age; but neither fact could have been deduced from her appearance.

"You will surely go in and see Mrs. Esdaile," she repeated, glancing up at him with eyes which had in them something between a challenge and a caress.

"I did not come to see Mrs. Esdaile," he answered, with no relaxation of his cold and grave manner; "I came to see you."

"I am sure I should be highly honoured," she said, with just the slightest little touch of brogue in her accent. "What are the students to do without their Professor?"

"I have already completed my academic duties. Take my arm, and we shall walk in the sunshine. Surely we cannot wonder that Eastern people should

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have made a deity of the sun. It is the great beneficent force of Nature—man's ally against cold, sterility, and all that is abhorrent to him. What were you reading?"

"Hale's *Matter and Life*."

The Professor raised his thick eyebrows.

"Hale!" he said, and then again in a kind of whisper, "Hale!"

"You differ from him?" she asked.

"It is not I who differ from him. I am only a monad—a thing of no moment. The whole tendency of the highest plane of modern thought differs from him. He defends the indefensible. He is an excellent observer, but a feeble reasoner. I should not recommend you to found your conclusions upon 'Hale.'"

"I must read *Nature's Chronicle* to counteract his pernicious influence," said Mrs. O'James, with a soft, cooing laugh.

*Nature's Chronicle* was one of the many books in which Professor Ainslie Grey had enforced the negative doctrines of scientific agnosticism.

"It is a faulty work," said he; "I cannot recommend it. I would rather refer you to the standard writings of some of my older and more eloquent colleagues."

There was a pause in their talk as they paced up and down on the green, velvet-like lawn in the genial sunshine.

"Have you thought at all," he asked at last, "of the matter upon which I spoke to you last night?"

She said nothing, but walked by his side with her eyes averted and her face aslant.

"I would not hurry you unduly," he continued. "I know that it is a matter which can scarcely be

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decided off-hand. In my own case, it cost me some thought before I ventured to make the suggestion. I am not an emotional man, but I am conscious in your presence of the great evolutionary instinct which makes either sex the complement of the other."

"You believe in love, then?" she asked, with a twinkling, upward glance.

"I am forced to."

"And yet you can deny the soul?"

"How far these questions are psychic and how far material is still *sub judice*," said the Professor, with an air of toleration. "Protoplasm may prove to be the physical basis of love as well as of life."

"How inflexible you are!" she exclaimed; "you would draw love down to the level of physics."

"Or draw physics up to the level of love."

"Come, that is much better," she cried, with her sympathetic laugh. "That is really very pretty, and puts science in quite a delightful light."

Her eyes sparkled, and she tossed her chin with the pretty, wilful air of a woman who is mistress of the situation.

"I have reason to believe," said the Professor, "that my position here will prove to be only a stepping-stone to some wider scene of scientific activity. Yet, even here, my chair brings me in some fifteen hundred pounds a year, which is supplemented by a few hundreds from my books. I should therefore be in a position to provide you with those comforts to which you are accustomed. So much for my pecuniary position. As to my constitution, it has always been sound. I have never suffered from any illness in my life, save fleeting attacks of cephalalgia, the result of too

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prolonged a stimulation of the centres of cerebration. My father and mother had no sign of any morbid diathesis, but I will not conceal from you that my grandfather was afflicted with podagra."

Mrs. O'James looked startled.

"Is that very serious?" she asked.

"It is gout," said the Professor.

"Oh, is that all? It sounded much worse than that."

"It is a grave taint, but I trust that I shall not be a victim to atavism. I have laid these facts before you because they are factors which cannot be overlooked in forming your decision. May I ask now whether you see your way to accepting my proposal?"

He paused in his walk, and looked earnestly and expectantly down at her.

A struggle was evidently going on in her mind. Her eyes were cast down, her little slipper tapped the lawn, and her fingers played nervously with her chatelaine. Suddenly, with a sharp, quick gesture which had in it something of *abandon* and recklessness, she held out her hand to her companion.

"I accept," she said.

They were standing under the shadow of the hawthorn. He stooped gravely down, and kissed her glove-covered fingers.

"I trust that you may never have cause to regret your decision," he said.

"I trust that *you* never may," she cried, with a heaving breast.

There were tears in her eyes, and her lips twitched with some strong emotion.

"Come into the sunshine again," said he. "It is the great restorative. Your nerves are shaken.

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Some little congestion of the medulla and pons. It is always instructive to reduce psychic or emotional conditions to their physical equivalents. You feel that your anchor is still firm in a bottom of ascertained fact."

"But it is so dreadfully unromantic," said Mrs. O'James, with her old twinkle.

"Romance is the offspring of imagination and of ignorance. Where science throws her calm, clear light there is happily no room for romance."

"But is not love romance?" she asked.

"Not at all. Love has been taken away from the poets, and has been brought within the domain of true science. It may prove to be one of the great cosmic elementary forces. When the atom of hydrogen draws the atom of chlorine toward it to form the perfected molecule of hydrochloric acid, the force which it exerts may be intrinsically similar to that which draws me to you. Attraction and repulsion appear to be the primary forces. This is attraction."

"And here is repulsion," said Mrs. O'James, as a stout, florid lady came sweeping across the lawn in their direction. "So glad you have come out, Mrs. Esdaile! Here is Professor Grey."

"How do you do, Professor?" said the lady, with some little pomposity of manner. "You were very wise to stay out here on so lovely a day. Is it not heavenly?"

"It is certainly very fine weather," the Professor answered.

"Listen to the wind sighing in the trees!" cried Mrs. Esdaile, holding up one finger. "It is Nature's lullaby. Could you not imagine it, Professor Grey, to be the whisperings of angels?"

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"The idea had not occurred to me, madam."

"Ah, Professor, I have always the same complaint against you. A want of *rapprochement* with the deeper meanings of nature. Shall I say a want of imagination? You do not feel an emotional thrill at the singing of that thrush?"

"I confess that I am not conscious of one, Mrs. Esdaile."

"Or at the delicate tint of that background of leaves? See the rich greens!"

"Chlorophyll," murmured the Professor.

"Science is so hopelessly prosaic. It dissects and labels, and loses sight of the great things in its attention to the little ones. You have a poor opinion of woman's intellect, Professor Grey. I think that I have heard you say so."

"It is a question of *avoir-dupois*," said the Professor, closing his eyes and shrugging his shoulders. "The female cerebrum averages two ounces less in weight than the male. No doubt there are exceptions. Nature is always elastic."

"But the heaviest thing is not always the strongest," said Mrs. O'James, laughing. "Isn't there a law of compensation in science? May we not hope to make up in quality for what we lack in quantity?"

"I think not," remarked the Professor, gravely. "But there is your luncheon-gong. No, thank you, Mrs. Esdaile, I cannot stay. My carriage is waiting. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mrs. O'James."

He raised his hat and stalked slowly away among the laurel bushes.

"He has no taste," said Mrs. Esdaile—"no eye for beauty."

"On the contrary," Mrs. O'James answered, with

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a saucy little jerk of the chin. "He has just asked me to be his wife."

As Professor Ainslie Grey ascended the steps of his house, the hall-door opened and a dapper gentleman stepped briskly out. He was somewhat sallow in the face, with dark, beady eyes, and a short, black beard with an aggressive bristle. Thought and work had left their traces upon his face, but he moved with the brisk activity of a man who had not yet bade good-bye to his youth.

"I'm in luck's way," he cried. "I wanted to see you."

"Then come back into the library," said the Professor; "you must stay and have lunch with us."

The two men entered the hall, and the Professor led the way into his private sanctum. He motioned his companion into an arm-chair.

"I trust that you have been successful, O'Brien," said he. "I should be loath to exercise any undue pressure upon my sister Ada; but I have given her to understand that there is no one whom I should prefer for a brother-in-law to my most brilliant scholar, the author of 'Some Remarks upon the Bile-Pigments, with special reference to Urobilin.'"

"You are very kind, Professor Grey—you have always been very kind," said the other. "I approached Miss Grey upon the subject; she did not say No."

"She said Yes, then?"

"No; she proposed to leave the matter open until my return from Edinburgh. I go to-day, as you know, and I hope to commence my research to-morrow."

"On the comparative anatomy of the vermiform



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appendix, by James M'Murdo O'Brien," said the Professor, sonorously. "It is a glorious subject—a subject which lies at the very root of evolutionary philosophy."

"Ah! she is the dearest girl," cried O'Brien, with a sudden little spurt of Celtic enthusiasm—"she is the soul of truth and of honour."

"The vermiform appendix—" began the Professor.

"She is an angel from heaven," interrupted the other. "I fear that it is my advocacy of scientific freedom in religious thought which stands in my way with her."

"You must not truckle upon that point. You must be true to your convictions; let there be no compromise there."

"My reason is true to agnosticism, and yet I am conscious of a void—a vacuum. I had feelings at the old church at home between the scent of the incense and the roll of the organ, such as I have never experienced in the laboratory or the lecture-room."

"Sensuous—purely sensuous," said the Professor, rubbing his chin. "Vague hereditary tendencies stirred into life by the stimulation of the nasal and auditory nerves."

"Maybe so, maybe so," the younger man answered thoughtfully. "But this was not what I wished to speak to you about. Before I enter your family, your sister and you have a claim to know all that I can tell you about my career. Of my worldly prospects I have already spoken to you. There is only one point which I have omitted to mention. I am a widower."

The Professor raised his eyebrows.

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"This is news indeed," said he.

"I married shortly after my arrival in Australia. Miss Thurston was her name. I met her in society. It was a most unhappy match."

Some painful emotion possessed him. His quick, expressive features quivered, and his white hands tightened upon the arms of the chair. The Professor turned away toward the window.

"You are the best judge," he remarked; "but I should not think that it was necessary to go into details."

"You have a right to know everything—you and Miss Grey. It is not a matter on which I can well speak to her direct. Poor Jinny was the best of women, but she was open to flattery, and liable to be misled by designing persons. She was untrue to me, Grey. It is a hard thing to say of the dead, but she was untrue to me. She fled to Auckland with a man whom she had known before her marriage. The brig which carried them foundered, and not a soul was saved."

"This is very painful, O'Brien," said the Professor, with a deprecatory motion of his hand. "I cannot see, however, how it affects your relation to my sister."

"I have eased my conscience," said O'Brien, rising from his chair; "I have told you all that there is to tell. I should not like the story to reach you through any lips but my own."

"You are right, O'Brien. Your action has been most honourable and considerate. But you are not to blame in the matter, save that perhaps you showed a little precipitancy in choosing a life-partner without due care and inquiry."

O'Brien drew his hand across his eyes,

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"Poor girl!" he cried. "God help me, I love her still! But I must go."

"You will lunch with us?"

"No, Professor; I have my packing still to do. I have already bade Miss Grey adieu. In two months I shall see you again."

"You will probably find me a married man."

"Married!"

"Yes, I have been thinking of it."

"My dear Professor, let me congratulate you with all my heart. I had no idea. Who is the lady?"

"Mrs. O'James is her name—a widow of the same nationality as yourself. But to return to matters of importance, I should be very happy to see the proofs of your paper upon the vermiform appendix. I may be able to furnish you with material for a footnote or two."

"Your assistance will be invaluable to me," said O'Brien, with enthusiasm, and the two men parted in the hall. The Professor walked back into the dining-room, where his sister was already seated at the luncheon-table.

"I shall be married at the registrar's," he remarked; "I should strongly recommend you to do the same."

Professor Ainslie Grey was as good as his word. A fortnight's cessation of his classes gave him an opportunity which was too good to let pass. Mrs. O'James was an orphan, without relations and almost without friends in the country. There was no obstacle in the way of a speedy wedding. They were married, accordingly, in the quietest manner possible, and went off to Cambridge together, where the Professor and his charming wife were present at several academic observances, and varied

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

the routine of their honeymoon by incursions into biological laboratories and medical libraries. Scientific friends were loud in their congratulations, not only upon Mrs. Grey's beauty, but upon the unusual quickness and intelligence which she displayed in discussing physiological questions. The Professor was himself astonished at the accuracy of her information. "You have a remarkable range of knowledge for a woman, Jeannette," he remarked upon more than one occasion. He was even prepared to admit that her cerebrum might be of the normal weight.

One foggy, drizzling morning they returned to Birchespool, for the next day would re-open the session, and Professor Ainslie Grey prided himself upon having never once in his life failed to appear in his lecture-room at the very stroke of the hour. Miss Ada Grey welcomed them with a constrained cordiality, and handed over the keys of office to the new mistress. Mrs. Grey pressed her warmly to remain, but she explained that she had already accepted an invitation which would engage her for some months. The same evening she departed for the south of England.

A couple of days later the maid carried a card just after breakfast into the library where the Professor sat revising his morning lecture. It announced the re-arrival of Dr. James M'Murdo O'Brien. Their meeting was effusively genial on the part of the younger man, and coldly precise on that of his former teacher.

"You see there have been changes," said the Professor.

"So I heard. Miss Grey told me in her letters, and I read the notice in the *British Medical*

## A PHYSIOLOGIST'S WIFE

*Journal.* So it's really married you are. How quickly and quietly you have managed it all!"

"I am constitutionally averse to anything in the nature of show or ceremony. My wife is a sensible woman—I may even go the length of saying that, for a woman, she is abnormally sensible. She quite agreed with me in the course which I have adopted."

"And your research on *Vallisneria*?"

"This matrimonial incident has interrupted it, but I have resumed my classes, and we shall soon be quite in harness again."

"I must see Miss Grey before I leave England. We have corresponded, and I think that all will be well. She must come out with me. I don't think I could go without her."

The Professor shook his head.

"Your nature is not so weak as you pretend," he said. "Questions of this sort are, after all, quite subordinate to the great duties of life."

O'Brien smiled.

"You would have me take out my Celtic soul and put in a Saxon one," he said. "Either my brain is too small or my heart is too big. But when may I call and pay my respects to Mrs. Grey? Will she be at home this afternoon?"

"She is at home now. Come into the morning-room. She will be glad to make your acquaintance."

They walked across the linoleum-paved hall. The Professor opened the door of the room, and walked in, followed by his friend. Mrs. Grey was sitting in a basket-chair by the window, light and fairy-like in a loose-flowing, pink morning-gown. Seeing a visitor, she rose and swept toward them. The Professor heard a dull thud behind him.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

O'Brien had fallen back into a chair, with his hand pressed tight to his side.

"Jinny!" he gasped—"Jinny!"

Mrs. Grey stopped dead in her advance, and stared at him with a face from which every expression had been struck out, save one of astonishment and horror. Then with a sharp intaking of the breath she reeled, and would have fallen had the Professor not thrown his long, nervous arm round her.

"Try this sofa," said he.

She sank back among the cushions with the same white, cold, dead look upon her face. The Professor stood with his back to the empty fireplace and glanced from the one to the other.

"So, O'Brien," he said at last, "you have already made the acquaintance of my wife!"

"Your wife," cried his friend hoarsely. "She is no wife of yours. God help me, she is *my* wife."

The Professor stood rigidly upon the hearth-rug. His long, thin fingers were intertwined, and his head had sunk a little forward. His two companions had eyes only for each other.

"Jinny!" said he.

"James!"

"How could you leave me so, Jinny? How could you have the heart to do it? I thought you were dead. I mourned for your death—ay, and you have made me mourn for you living. You have withered my life."

She made no answer, but lay back among the cushions with her eyes still fixed upon him.

"Why do you not speak?"

"Because you are right, James. I have treated you cruelly—shamefully. But it is not as bad as you think."

## A PHYSIOLOGIST'S WIFE

"You fled with De Horta."

"No, I did not. At the last moment my better nature prevailed. He went alone. But I was ashamed to come back after what I had written to you. I could not face you. I took passage alone to England under a new name, and here I have lived ever since. It seemed to me that I was beginning life again. I knew that you thought I was drowned. Who could have dreamed that fate would throw us together again! When the Professor asked me——"

She stopped and gave a gasp for breath.

"You are faint," said the Professor,—“keep the head low; it aids the cerebral circulation.” He flattened down the cushion. “I am sorry to leave you, O'Brien; but I have my class duties to look to. Possibly I may find you here when I return.”

With a grim and rigid face he strode out of the room. Not one of the three hundred students who listened to his lecture saw any change in his manner and appearance, or could have guessed that the austere gentleman in front of them had found out at last how hard it is to rise above one's humanity. The lecture over, he performed his routine duties in the laboratory, and then drove back to his own house. He did not enter by the front door, but passed through the garden to the folding glass case-ment which led out of the morning-room. As he approached he heard his wife's voice and O'Brien's in loud and animated talk. He paused among the rose-bushes, uncertain whether to interrupt them or no. Nothing was further from his nature than to play the eavesdropper; but as he stood, still hesitating, words fell upon his ear which struck him rigid and motionless.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"You are still my wife, Jinny," said O'Brien; "I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. I love you, and I have never ceased to love you, though you had forgotten me."

"No, James, my heart was always in Melbourne. I have always been yours. I thought that it was better for you that I should seem to be dead."

"You must choose between us now, Jinny. If you determine to remain here, I shall not open my lips. There shall be no scandal. If, on the other hand, you come with me, it's little I care about the world's opinion. Perhaps I am as much to blame as you. I thought too much of my work and too little of my wife."

The Professor heard the cooing, caressing laugh which he knew so well.

"I shall go with you, James," she said.

"And the Professor——?"

"The poor Professor! But he will not mind much, James; he has no heart."

"We must tell him our resolution."

"There is no need," said Professor Ainslie Grey, stepping in through the open casement. "I have overheard the latter part of your conversation. I hesitated to interrupt you before you came to a conclusion."

O'Brien stretched out his hand and took that of the woman. They stood together with the sunshine on their faces. The Professor paused at the casement with his hands behind his back and his long black shadow fell between them.

"You have come to a wise decision," said he. "Go back to Australia together, and let what has passed be blotted out of your lives."

"But you—you—" stammered O'Brien.



## A PHYSIOLOGIST'S WIFE

The Professor waved his hand.

"Never trouble about me," he said.

The woman gave a gasping cry.

"What can I do or say?" she wailed. "How could I have foreseen this? I thought my old life was dead. But it has come back again, with all its hopes and its desires. What can I say to you, Ainslie? I have brought shame and disgrace upon a worthy man. I have blasted your life. How you must hate and loathe me! I wish to God that I had never been born!"

"I neither hate nor loathe you, Jeannette," said the Professor, quietly. "You are wrong in regretting your birth, for you have a worthy mission before you in aiding the life-work of a man who has shown himself capable of the highest order of scientific research. I cannot with justice blame you personally for what has occurred. How far the individual monad is to be held responsible for hereditary and engrained tendencies, is a question upon which science has not yet said her last word."

He stood with his finger-tips touching, and his body inclined as one who is gravely expounding a difficult and impersonal subject. O'Brien had stepped forward to say something, but the other's attitude and manner froze the words upon his lips. Condolence or sympathy would be an impertinence to one who could so easily merge his private griefs in broad questions of abstract philosophy.

"It is needless to prolong the situation," the Professor continued, in the same measured tones. "My brougham stands at the door. I beg that you will use it as your own. Perhaps it would be as well that you should leave the town without unnecessary delay. Your things, Jeannette, shall be forwarded."

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O'Brien hesitated with a hanging head.

"I hardly dare offer you my hand," he said.

"On the contrary. I think that of the three of us you come best out of the affair. You have nothing to be ashamed of."

"Your sister——"

"I shall see that the matter is put to her in its true light. Good-bye! Let me have a copy of your recent research. Good-bye, Jeannette!"

"Good-bye!"

Their hands met, and for one short moment their eyes also. It was only a glance, but for the first and last time the woman's intuition cast a light for itself into the dark places of a strong man's soul. She gave a little gasp, and her other hand rested for an instant, as white and as light as thistle-down, upon his shoulder.

"James, James!" she cried. "Don't you see that he is stricken to the heart?"

He turned her quietly away from him.

"I am not an emotional man," he said. "I have my duties—my research on *Vallisneria*. The brougham is there. Your cloak is in the hall. Tell John where you wish to be driven. He will bring you anything you need. Now go."

His last two words were so sudden, so volcanic, in such contrast to his measured voice and mask-like face, that they swept the two away from him. He closed the door behind them and paced slowly up and down the room. Then he passed into the library and looked out over the wire blind. The carriage was rolling away. He caught a last glimpse of the woman who had been his wife. He saw the feminine droop of her head, and the curve of her beautiful throat.

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Under some foolish, aimless impulse, he took a few quick steps toward the door. Then he turned, and, throwing himself into his study chair, he plunged back into his work.

There was little scandal about this singular domestic incident. The Professor had few personal friends, and seldom went into society. His marriage had been so quiet that most of his colleagues had never ceased to regard him as a bachelor. Mrs. Esdaile and a few others might talk, but their field for gossip was limited, for they could only guess vaguely at the cause of this sudden separation.

The Professor was as punctual as ever at his classes, and as zealous in directing the laboratory work of those who studied under him. His own private researches were pushed on with feverish energy. It was no uncommon thing for his servants, when they came down of a morning, to hear the shrill scratchings of his tireless pen, or to meet him on the staircase as he ascended, grey and silent, to his room. In vain his friends assured him that such a life must undermine his health. He lengthened his hours until day and night were one long, ceaseless task.

Gradually under this discipline a change came over his appearance. His features, always inclined to gauntness, became even sharper and more pronounced. There were deep lines about his temples and across his brow. His cheek was sunken and his complexion bloodless. His knees gave under him when he walked; and once when passing out of his lecture-room he fell and had to be assisted to his carriage.

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

This was just before the end of the session; and soon after the holidays commenced, the professors who still remained in Birchespool were shocked to hear that their brother of the chair of physiology had sunk so low that no hopes could be entertained of his recovery. Two eminent physicians had consulted over his case without being able to give a name to the affection from which he suffered. A steadily decreasing vitality appeared to be the only symptom—a bodily weakness which left the mind unclouded. He was much interested himself in his own case, and made notes of his subjective sensations as an aid to diagnosis. Of his approaching end he spoke in his usual unemotional and somewhat pedantic fashion. "It is the assertion," he said, "of the liberty of the individual cell as opposed to the cell-commune. It is the dissolution of a co-operative society. The process is one of great interest."

And so one grey morning his co-operative society dissolved. Very quietly and softly he sank into his eternal sleep. His two physicians felt some slight embarrassment when called upon to fill in his certificate.

"It is difficult to give it a name," said one.

"Very," said the other.

"If he were not such an unemotional man, I should have said that he had died from some sudden nervous shock—from, in fact, what the vulgar would call a broken heart."

"I don't think poor Grey was that sort of a man at all."

"Let us call it cardiac, anyhow," said the older physician.

So they did so.

## THE CASE OF LADY SANNOX

THE relations between Douglas Stone and the notorious Lady Sannox were very well known both among the fashionable circles of which she was a brilliant member, and the scientific bodies which numbered him among their most illustrious *confrères*. There was naturally, therefore, a very widespread interest when it was announced one morning that the lady had absolutely and for ever taken the veil, and that the world would see her no more. When, at the very tail of this rumour, there came the assurance that the celebrated operating surgeon, the man of steel nerves, had been found in the morning by his valet, seated on one side of his bed, smiling pleasantly upon the universe, with both legs jammed into one side of his breeches and his great brain about as valuable as a cap full of porridge, the matter was strong enough to give quite a little thrill of interest to folk who had never hoped that their jaded nerves were capable of such a sensation.

Douglas Stone in his prime was one of the most remarkable men in England. Indeed, he could hardly be said to have ever reached his prime, for he was but nine-and-thirty at the time of this little incident. Those who knew him best were aware that famous as he was as a surgeon, he might have succeeded with even greater rapidity in any of a dozen lines of life. He could have cut his way to fame as a soldier, struggled to it as an explorer,

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bullied for it in the courts, or built it out of stone and iron as an engineer. He was born to be great, for he could plan what another man dare not do, and he could do what another man dare not plan. In surgery none could follow him. His nerve, his judgment, his intuition, were things apart. Again and again his knife cut away death, but grazed the very springs of life in doing it, until his assistants were as white as the patient. His energy, his audacity, his full-blooded self-confidence—does not the memory of them still linger to the south of Marylebone Road and the north of Oxford Street?

His vices were as magnificent as his virtues, and infinitely more picturesque. Large as was his income, and it was the third largest of all professional men in London, it was far beneath the luxury of his living. Deep in his complex nature lay a rich vein of sensualism, at the sport of which he placed all the prizes of his life. The eye, the ear, the touch, the palate, all were his masters. The bouquet of old vintages, the scent of rare exotics, the curves and tints of the daintiest potteries of Europe, it was to these that the quick-running stream of gold was transformed. And then there came his sudden mad passion for Lady Sannox, when a single interview with two challenging glances and a whispered word set him ablaze. She was the loveliest woman in London, and the only one to him. He was one of the handsomest men in London, but not the only one to her. She had a liking for new experiences, and was gracious to most men who wooed her. It may have been cause or it may have been effect that Lord Sannox looked fifty, though he was but six-and-thirty.

He was a quiet, silent, neutral-tinted man this

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lord, with thin lips and heavy eyelids, much given to gardening, and full of home-like habits. He had at one time been fond of acting, had even rented a theatre in London, and on its boards had first seen Miss Marion Dawson, to whom he had offered his hand, his title, and the third of a county. Since his marriage this early hobby had become distasteful to him. Even in private theatricals it was no longer possible to persuade him to exercise the talent which he had often shown that he possessed. He was happier with a spud and a watering can among his orchids and chrysanthemums.

It was quite an interesting problem whether he was absolutely devoid of sense, or miserably wanting in spirit. Did he know his lady's ways and condone them, or was he a mere blind, doting fool? It was a point to be discussed over the teacups in snug little drawing-rooms, or with the aid of a cigar in the bow windows of clubs. Bitter and plain were the comments among men upon his conduct. There was but one who had a good word to say for him, and he was the most silent member in the smoking-room. He had seen him break in a horse at the University, and it seemed to have left an impression upon his mind.

But when Douglas Stone became the favourite all doubts as to Lord Sannox's knowledge or ignorance were set for ever at rest. There was no subterfuge about Stone. In his high-handed, impetuous fashion, he set all caution and discretion at defiance. The scandal became notorious. A learned body intimated that his name had been struck from the list of its vice-presidents. Two friends implored him to consider his professional credit. He cursed them all three, and spent forty guineas on a

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bangle to take with him to the lady. He was at her house every evening, and she drove in his carriage in the afternoons. There was not an attempt on either side to conceal their relations; but there came at last a little incident to interrupt them.

It was a dismal winter's night, very cold and gusty, with the wind whooping in the chimneys and blustering against the window-panes. A thin spatter of rain tinkled on the glass with each fresh sough of the gale, drowning for the instant the dull gurgle and drip from the eaves. Douglas Stone had finished his dinner, and sat by his fire in the study, a glass of rich port upon the malachite table at his elbow. As he raised it to his lips, he held it up against the lamplight, and watched with the eye of a connoisseur the tiny scales of beeswing which floated in its rich ruby depths. The fire, as it spurted up, threw fitful lights upon his bold, clear-cut face, with its widely-opened grey eyes, its thick and yet firm lips, and the deep, square jaw, which had something Roman in its strength and its animalism. He smiled from time to time as he nestled back in his luxurious chair. Indeed, he had a right to feel well pleased, for, against the advice of six colleagues, he had performed an operation that day of which only two cases were on record, and the result had been brilliant beyond all expectation. No other man in London would have had the daring to plan, or the skill to execute, such a heroic measure.

But he had promised Lady Sannox to see her that evening and it was already half-past eight. His hand was outstretched to the bell to order the carriage when he heard the dull thud of the knocker. An instant later there was the shuffling



## THE CASE OF LADY SANNÔX

of feet in the hall, and the sharp closing of a door.

"A patient to see you, sir, in the consulting-room," said the butler.

"About himself?"

"No, sir; I think he wants you to go out."

"It is too late," cried Douglas Stone peevishly.

"I won't go."

"This is his card, sir."

The butler presented it upon the gold salver which had been given to his master by the wife of a Prime Minister.

"'Hamil Ali, Smyrna.' Hum! The fellow is a Turk, I suppose."

"Yes, sir. He seems as if he came from abroad, sir. And he's in a terrible way."

"Tut, tut! I have an engagement. I must go somewhere else. But I'll see him. Show him in here, Pim."

A few moments later the butler swung open the door and ushered in a small and decrepit man, who walked with a bent back and with the forward push of the face and blink of the eyes which goes with extreme short sight. His face was swarthy, and his hair and beard of the deepest black. In one hand he held a turban of white muslin striped with red, in the other a small chamois leather bag.

"Good-evening," said Douglas Stone, when the butler had closed the door. "You speak English, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. I am from Asia Minor, but I speak English when I speak slow."

"You wanted me to go out, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. I wanted very much that you should see my wife."

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"I could come in the morning, but I have an engagement which prevents me from seeing your wife to-night."

The Turk's answer was a singular one. He pulled the string which closed the mouth of the chamois leather bag, and poured a flood of gold on to the table.

"There are one hundred pounds there," said he, "and I promise you that it will not take you an hour. I have a cab ready at the door."

Douglas Stone glanced at his watch. An hour would not make it too late to visit Lady Sannox. He had been there later. And the fee was an extraordinarily high one. He had been pressed by his creditors lately, and he could not afford to let such a chance pass. He would go.

"What is the case?" he asked.

"Oh, it is so sad a one! So sad a one! You have not, perhaps, heard of the daggers of the Almohades?"

"Never."

"Ah, they are Eastern daggers of a great age and of a singular shape, with the hilt like what you call a stirrup. I am a curiosity dealer, you understand, and that is why I have come to England from Smyrna, but next week I go back once more. Many things I brought with me, and I have a few things left, but among them, to my sorrow, is one of these daggers."

"You will remember that I have an appointment, sir," said the surgeon, with some irritation; "pray confine yourself to the necessary details."

"You will see that it is necessary. To-day my wife fell down in a faint in the room in which I

## THE CASE OF LADY SANNOX

keep my wares, and she cut her lower lip upon this cursed dagger of Almohades."

"I see," said Douglas Stone, rising. "And you wish me to dress the wound?"

"No, no, it is worse than that."

"What then?"

"These daggers are poisoned."

"Poisoned!"

"Yes, and there is no man, East or West, who can tell now what is the poison or what the cure. But all that is known I know, for my father was in this trade before me, and we have had much to do with these poisoned weapons."

"What are the symptoms?"

"Deep sleep, and death in thirty hours."

"And you say there is no cure. Why then should you pay me this considerable fee?"

"No drug can cure, but the knife may."

"And how?"

"The poison is slow of absorption. It remains for hours in the wound."

"Washing, then, might cleanse it?"

"No more than in a snake bite. It is too subtle and too deadly."

"Excision of the wound, then?"

"That is it. If it be on the finger, take the finger off. So said my father always. But think of where this wound is, and that it is my wife. It is dreadful!"

But familiarity with such grim matters may take the finer edge from a man's sympathy. To Douglas Stone this was already an interesting case, and he brushed aside as irrelevant the feeble objections of the husband.

"It appears to be that or nothing," said he

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

brusquely. "It is better to lose a lip than a life."

"Ah, yes, I know that you are right. Well, well, it is kismet, and it must be faced. I have the cab, and you will come with me and do this thing."

Douglas Stone took his case of bistouries from a drawer, and placed it with a roll of bandage and a compress of lint in his pocket. He must waste no more time if he were to see Lady Sannox.

"I am ready," said he, pulling on his overcoat. "Will you take a glass of wine before you go out into this cold air?"

His visitor shrank away, with a protesting hand upraised.

"You forget that I am a Mussulman, and a true follower of the Prophet," said he. "But tell me what is the bottle of green glass which you have placed in your pocket?"

"It is chloroform."

"Ah, that also is forbidden to us. It is a spirit, and we make no use of such things."

"What! You would allow your wife to go through an operation without an anæsthetic?"

"Ah! she will feel nothing, poor soul. The deep sleep has already come on, which is the first working of the poison. And then I have given her of our Smyrna opium. Come, sir, for already an hour has passed."

As they stepped out into the darkness, a sheet of rain was driven in upon their faces, and the hall lamp, which dangled from the arm of a marble Caryatid, went out with a fluff. Pim, the butler, pushed the heavy door to, straining hard with his shoulder against the wind, while the two men

## THE CASE OF LADY SANNOX

groped their way toward the yellow glare which showed where the cab was waiting. An instant later they were rattling upon their journey.

"Is it far?" asked Douglas Stone.

"Oh, no. We have a very little quiet place off the Euston Road."

The surgeon pressed the spring of his repeater and listened to the little tings which told him the hour. It was a quarter past nine. He calculated the distances, and the short time which it would take him to perform so trivial an operation. He ought to reach Lady Sannox by ten o'clock. Through the fogged windows he saw the blurred gas lamps dancing past, with occasionally the broader glare of a shop front. The rain was pelting and rattling upon the leathern top of the carriage, and the wheels swashed as they rolled through puddle and mud. Opposite to him the white headgear of his companion gleamed faintly through the obscurity. The surgeon felt in his pockets and arranged his needles, his ligatures and his safety-pins, that no time might be wasted when they arrived. He chafed with impatience and drummed his foot upon the floor.

But the cab slowed down at last and pulled up. In an instant Douglas Stone was out, and the Smyrna merchant's toe was at his very heel.

"You can wait," said he to the driver.

It was a mean-looking house in a narrow and sordid street. The surgeon, who knew his London well, cast a swift glance into the shadows, but there was nothing distinctive,—no shop, no movement, nothing but a double line of dull, flat-faced houses, a double stretch of wet flagstones which gleamed in the lamplight, and a double rush of

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water in the gutters which swirled and gurgled toward the sewer gratings. The door which faced them was blotched and discoloured, and a faint light in the fan pane above it served to show the dust and the grime which covered it. Above, in one of the bedroom windows, there was a dull yellow glimmer. The merchant knocked loudly, and, as he turned his dark face toward the light, Douglas Stone could see that it was contracted with anxiety. A bolt was drawn, and an elderly woman with a taper stood in the doorway, shielding the thin flame with her gnarled hand.

"Is all well?" gasped the merchant.

"She is as you left her, sir."

"She has not spoken?"

"No, she is in a deep sleep."

The merchant closed the door, and Douglas Stone walked down the narrow passage, glancing about him in some surprise as he did so. There was no oilcloth, no mat, no hat-rack. Deep grey dust and heavy festoons of cobwebs met his eyes everywhere. Following the old woman up the winding stair, his firm footfall echoed harshly through the silent house. There was no carpet.

The bedroom was on the second landing. Douglas Stone followed the old nurse into it, with the merchant at his heels. Here, at least, there was furniture and to spare. The floor was littered and the corners piled with Turkish cabinets, inlaid tables, coats of chain mail, strange pipes, and grotesque weapons. A single small lamp stood upon a bracket on the wall. Douglas Stone took it down, and picking his way among the lumber, walked over to a couch in the corner, on which lay a woman dressed in the Turkish fashion, with yash-

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mak and veil. The lower part of the face was exposed, and the surgeon saw a jagged cut which zig-zagged along the border of the under lip.

"You will forgive the yashmak," said the Turk. "You know our views about woman in the East."

But the surgeon was not thinking about the yashmak. This was no longer a woman to him. It was a case. He stooped and examined the wound carefully.

"There are no signs of irritation," said he. "We might delay the operation until local symptoms develop."

The husband wrung his hands in incontrollable agitation.

"Oh! sir, sir," he cried. "Do not trifle. You do not know. It is deadly. I know, and I give you my assurance that an operation is absolutely necessary. Only the knife can save her."

"And yet I am inclined to wait," said Douglas Stone.

"That is enough," the Turk cried, angrily. "Every minute is of importance, and I cannot stand here and see my wife allowed to sink. It only remains for me to give you my thanks for having come, and to call in some other surgeon before it is too late."

Douglas Stone hesitated. To refund that hundred pounds was no pleasant matter. But of course if he left the case he must return the money. And if the Turk were right and the woman died, his position before a coroner might be an embarrassing one.

"You have had personal experience of this poison?" he asked.

"I have."

## ROUND THE RED LAMP

"And you assure me that an operation is needful."

"I swear it by all that I hold sacred."

"The disfigurement will be frightful."

"I can understand that the mouth will not be a pretty one to kiss."

Douglas Stone turned fiercely upon the man. The speech was a brutal one. But the Turk has his own fashion of talk and of thought, and there was no time for wrangling. Douglas Stone drew a bistoury from his case, opened it and felt the keen straight edge with his forefinger. Then he held the lamp closer to the bed. Two dark eyes were gazing up at him through the slit in the yashmak. They were all iris, and the pupil was hardly to be seen.

"You have given her a very heavy dose of opium."

"Yes, she has had a good dose."

He glanced again at the dark eyes which looked straight at his own. They were dull and lustreless, but, even as he gazed, a little shifting sparkle came into them, and the lips quivered.

"She is not absolutely unconscious," said he.

"Would it not be well to use the knife while it will be painless?"

The same thought had crossed the surgeon's mind. He grasped the wounded lip with his forceps, and with two swift cuts he took out a broad V-shaped piece. The woman sprang up on the couch with a dreadful gurgling scream. Her covering was torn from her face. It was a face that he knew. In spite of that protruding upper lip and that slobber of blood, it was a face that he knew. She kept on putting her hand up to the



## THE CASE OF LADY SANNOX

gap and screaming. Douglas Stone sat down at the foot of the couch with his knife and his forceps. The room was whirling round, and he had felt something go like a ripping seam behind his ear. A bystander would have said that his face was the more ghastly of the two. As in a dream, or as if he had been looking at something at the play, he was conscious that the Turk's hair and beard lay upon the table, and that Lord Sannox was leaning against the wall with his hand to his side, laughing silently. The screams had died away now, and the dreadful head had dropped back again upon the pillow, but Douglas Stone still sat motionless, and Lord Sannox still chuckled quietly to himself.

"It was really very necessary for Marion, this operation," said he, "not physically, but morally, you know, morally."

Douglas Stone stooped forward and began to play with the fringe of the coverlet.

"I had long intended to make a little example," said Lord Sannox, suavely. "Your note of Wednesday miscarried, and I have it here in my pocket-book. I took some pains in carrying out my idea. The wound, by the way, was from nothing more dangerous than my signet ring."

He glanced keenly at his silent companion, and cocked the small revolver which he held in his coat-pocket. But Douglas Stone was still picking at the coverlet.

"You see you have kept your appointment after all," said Lord Sannox.

And at that Douglas Stone began to laugh. He laughed long and loudly. But Lord Sannox did not laugh now. Something like fear sharpened and hardened his features. He walked from the

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room, and he walked on tiptoe. The old woman was waiting outside.

"Attend to your mistress when she awakes," said Lord Sannox.

Then he went down to the street. The cab was at the door, and the driver raised his hand to his hat.

"John," said Lord Sannox, "you will take the doctor home first. He will want leading downstairs, I think. Tell his butler that he has been taken ill at a case."

"Very good, sir."

"Then you can take Lady Sannox home."

"And how about yourself, sir?"

"Oh, my address for the next few months will be Hotel di Roma, Venice. Just see that the letters are sent on. And tell Stevens to exhibit all the purple chrysanthemums next Monday, and to wire me the result."

## A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

THE Foreign Minister was down with the gout. For a week he had been confined to the house, and he had missed two Cabinet Councils at a time when the pressure upon his department was severe. It is true that he had an excellent under-secretary and an admirable staff, but the Minister was a man of such ripe experience and of such proven sagacity that things halted in his absence. When his firm hand was at the wheel the great ship of State rode easily and smoothly upon her way; when it was removed she yawed and staggered until twelve British editors rose up in their omniscience and traced out twelve several courses, each of which was the sole and only path to safety. Then it was that the Opposition said vain things, and that the harassed Prime Minister prayed for his absent colleague.

The Foreign Minister sat in his dressing-room in the great house in Cavendish Square. It was May, and the square garden shot up like a veil of green in front of his window, but, in spite of the sunshine, a fire crackled and sputtered in the grate of the sick-room. In a deep-red plush arm-chair sat the great statesman, his head leaning back upon a silken pillow, one foot stretched forward and supported upon a padded rest. His deeply-lined, finely-chiselled face and slow-moving, heavily-pouched eyes were turned upward toward the carved and painted ceiling, with that inscrutable

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expression which had been the despair and the admiration of his Continental colleagues upon the occasion of the famous Congress when he had made his first appearance in the arena of European diplomacy. Yet at the present moment his capacity for hiding his emotions had for the instant failed him, for about the lines of his strong, straight mouth and the puckers of his broad, over-hanging forehead, there were sufficient indications of the restlessness and impatience which consumed him.

And indeed there was enough to make a man chafe, for he had much to think of, and yet was bereft of the power of thought. There was, for example, that question of the Dobrutscha and the navigation of the mouths of the Danube which was ripe for settlement. The Russian Chancellor had sent a masterly statement upon the subject, and it was the pet ambition of our Minister to answer it in a worthy fashion. Then there was the blockade of Crete, and the British fleet lying off Cape Matapan, waiting for instructions which might change the course of European history. And there were those three unfortunate Macedonian tourists, whose friends were momentarily expecting to receive their ears or their fingers in default of the exorbitant ransom which had been demanded. They must be plucked out of those mountains, by force or by diplomacy, or an outraged public would vent its wrath upon Downing Street. All these questions pressed for a solution, and yet here was the Foreign Minister of England, planted in an arm-chair, with his whole thoughts and attention riveted upon the ball of his right toe! It was humiliating—horribly humiliating! His reason revolted at it. He had been a respecter of himself, a re-

## A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

specter of his own will; but what sort of a machine was it which could be utterly thrown out of gear by a little piece of inflamed gristle? He groaned and writhed among his cushions.

But, after all, was it quite impossible that he should go down to the House? Perhaps the doctor was exaggerating the situation. There was a Cabinet Council that day. He glanced at his watch. It must be nearly over by now. But at least he might perhaps venture to drive down as far as Westminster. He pushed back the little round table with its bristle of medicine-bottles, and levering himself up with a hand upon either arm of the chair, he clutched a thick, oak stick and hobbled slowly across the room. For a moment as he moved, his energy of mind and body seemed to return to him. The British fleet should sail from Matapan. Pressure should be brought to bear upon the Turks. The Greeks should be shown—Ow! In an instant the Mediterranean was blotted out, and nothing remained but that huge, undeniable, intrusive, red-hot toe. He staggered to the window and rested his left hand upon the ledge, while he propped himself upon his stick with his right. Outside lay the bright, cool, square garden, a few well-dressed passers-by, and a single, neatly-appointed carriage, which was driving away from his own door. His quick eye caught the coat-of-arms on the panel, and his lips set for a moment and his bushy eyebrows gathered ominously with a deep furrow between them. He hobbled back to his seat, and struck the gong which stood upon the table.

“Your mistress!” said he as the serving-man entered.

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It was clear that it was impossible to think of going to the House. The shooting up his leg warned him that his doctor had not overestimated the situation. But he had a little mental worry now which had for the moment eclipsed his physical ailments. He tapped the ground impatiently with his stick until the door of the dressing-room swung open, and a tall, elegant lady of rather more than middle age swept into the chamber. Her hair was touched with grey, but her calm, sweet face had all the freshness of youth, and her gown of green shot plush, with a sparkle of gold passementerie at her bosom and shoulders, showed off the lines of her fine figure to their best advantage.

"You sent for me, Charles?"

"Whose carriage was that which drove away just now?"

"Oh, you've been up!" she cried, shaking an admonitory forefinger. "What an old dear it is! How can you be so rash? What am I to say to Sir William when he comes? You know that he gives up his cases when they are insubordinate."

"In this instance the case may give him up," said the Minister, peevishly; "but I must beg, Clara, that you will answer my question."

"Oh! the carriage! It must have been Lord Arthur Sibthorpe's."

"I saw the three chevrons upon the panel," muttered the invalid.

His lady had pulled herself a little straighter and opened her large blue eyes.

"Then why ask?" she said. "One might almost think, Charles, that you were laying a trap! Did you expect that I should deceive you? You have not had your lithia powder."

## A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

"For Heaven's sake, leave it alone! I asked because I was surprised that Lord Arthur should call here. I should have fancied, Clara, that I had made myself sufficiently clear on that point. Who received him?"

"I did. That is, I and Ida."

"I will not have him brought into contact with Ida. I do not approve of it. The matter has gone too far already."

The lady seated herself on a velvet-topped footstool, and bent her stately figure over the Minister's hand, which she patted softly between her own.

"Now you have said it, Charles," said she. "It has gone too far—I give you my word, dear, that I never suspected it until it was past all mending. I may be to blame—no doubt I am; but it was all so sudden. The tail end of the season and a week at Lord Donnythorne's. That was all. But oh! Charlie, she loves him so, and she is our only one! How can we make her miserable?"

"Tut, tut!" cried the Minister impatiently, slapping on the plush arm of his chair. "This is too much. I tell you, Clara, I give you my word, that all my official duties, all the affairs of this great empire, do not give me the trouble that Ida does."

"But she is our only one, Charles."

"The more reason that she should not make a *mésalliance*."

"*Mésalliance*, Charles! Lord Arthur Sibthorpe, son of the Duke of Tavistock, with a pedigree from the Heptarchy. Debrett takes them right back to Morcar, Earl of Northumberland."

The Minister shrugged his shoulders.

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"Lord Arthur is the fourth son of the poorest duke in England," said he. "He has neither prospects nor profession."

"But, oh! Charlie, you could find him both."

"I do not like him. I do not care for the connection."

"But consider Ida! You know how frail her health is. Her whole soul is set upon him. You would not have the heart, Charles, to separate them?"

There was a tap at the door. The lady swept toward it and threw it open.

"Yes, Thomas?"

"If you please, my lady, the Prime Minister is below."

"Show him up, Thomas."

"Now, Charlie, you must not excite yourself over public matters. Be very good and cool and reasonable, like a darling. I am sure that I may trust you."

She threw her light shawl round the invalid's shoulders, and slipped away into the bedroom as the great man was ushered in at the door of the dressing-room.

"My dear Charles," said he cordially, stepping into the room with all the boyish briskness for which he was famous, "I trust that you find yourself a little better. Almost ready for harness, eh? We miss you sadly, both in the House and in the Council. Quite a storm brewing over this Grecian business. The *Times* took a nasty line this morning."

"So I saw," said the invalid, smiling up at his chief. "Well, well, we must let them see that the country is not entirely ruled from Printing House



## A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

Square yet. We must keep our own course without faltering."

"Certainly, Charles, most undoubtedly," assented the Prime Minister, with his hands in his pockets.

"It was so kind of you to call. I am all impatience to know what was done in the Council."

"Pure formalities, nothing more. By the way, the Macedonian prisoners are all right."

"Thank goodness for that!"

"We adjourned all other business until we should have you with us next week. The question of a dissolution begins to press. The reports from the provinces are excellent."

The Foreign Minister moved impatiently and groaned.

"We must really straighten up our foreign business a little," said he. "I must get Novikoff's Note answered. It is clever, but the fallacies are obvious. I wish, too, we could clear up the Afghan frontier. This illness is most exasperating. There is so much to be done, but my brain is clouded. Sometimes I think it is the gout, and sometimes I put it down to the colchicum."

"What will our medical autocrat say?" laughed the Prime Minister. "You are so irreverent, Charles. With a bishop one may feel at one's ease. They are not beyond the reach of argument. But a doctor with his stethoscope and thermometer is a thing apart. Your reading does not impinge upon him. He is serenely above you. And then, of course, he takes you at a disadvantage. With health and strength one might cope with him. Have you read Hahnemann? What are your views upon Hahnemann?"

The invalid knew his illustrious colleague too

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well to follow him down any of those by-paths of knowledge in which he delighted to wander. To his intensely shrewd and practical mind there was something repellent in the waste of energy involved in a discussion upon the Early Church or the twenty-seven principles of Mesmer. It was his custom to slip past such conversational openings with a quick step and an averted face.

"I have hardly glanced at his writings," said he. "By the way, I suppose that there was no special departmental news?"

"Ah! I had almost forgotten. Yes, it was one of the things which I had called to tell you. Sir Algernon Jones has resigned at Tangier. There is a vacancy there."

"It had better be filled at once. The longer delay the more applicants."

"Ah, patronage, patronage!" sighed the Prime Minister. "Every vacancy makes one doubtful friend and a dozen very positive enemies. Who so bitter as the disappointed place-seeker? But you are right, Charles. Better fill it at once, especially as there is some little trouble in Morocco. I understand that the Duke of Tavistock would like the place for his fourth son, Lord Arthur Sibthorpe. We are under some obligation to the Duke."

The Foreign Minister sat up eagerly.

"My dear friend," he said, "it is the very appointment which I should have suggested. Lord Arthur would be very much better in Tangier at present than in—in——"

"Cavendish Square?" hazarded his chief, with a little arch query of his eyebrows.

"Well, let us say London. He has manner and tact. He was at Constantinople in Norton's time."

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"Then he talks Arabic?"

"A smattering. But his French is good."

"Speaking of Arabic, Charles, have you dipped into Averroes?"

"No, I have not. But the appointment would be an excellent one in every way. Would you have the great goodness to arrange the matter in my absence?"

"Certainly, Charles, certainly. Is there anything else that I can do?"

"No. I hope to be in the house by Monday."

"I trust so. We miss you at every turn. The *Times* will try to make mischief over that Grecian business. A leader-writer is a terribly irresponsible thing, Charles. There is no method by which he may be confuted, however preposterous his assertions. Good-bye! Read Porson! Good-bye!"

He shook the invalid's hand, gave a jaunty wave of his broad-brimmed hat, and darted out of the room with the same elasticity and energy with which he had entered it.

The footman had already opened the great folding door to usher the illustrious visitor to his carriage, when a lady stepped from the drawing-room and touched him on the sleeve. From behind the half-closed portière of stamped velvet a little pale face peeped out, half-curious, half-frightened.

"May I have one word?"

"Surely, Lady Charles."

"I hope it is not intrusive: I would not for the world overstep the limits——"

"My dear Lady Charles!" interrupted the Prime Minister, with a youthful bow and wave.

"Pray do not answer me if I go too far. But I know that Lord Arthur Sibthorpe has applied for

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Tangier. Would it be a liberty if I asked you what chance he has?"

"The post is filled up."

"Oh!"

In the foreground and background there was a disappointed face.

"And Lord Arthur has it."

The Prime Minister chuckled over his little piece of roguery.

"We have just decided it," he continued. "Lord Arthur must go in a week. I am delighted to perceive, Lady Charles, that the appointment has your approval. Tangier is a place of extraordinary interest. Catherine of Braganza and Colonel Kirke will occur to your memory. Burton has written well upon Northern Africa. I dine at Windsor, so I am sure that you will excuse my leaving you. I trust that Lord Charles will be better. He can hardly fail to be so with such a nurse."

He bowed, waved, and was off down the steps to his brougham. As he drove away, Lady Charles could see that he was already deeply absorbed in a paper-covered novel.

She pushed back the velvet curtains, and returned into the drawing-room. Her daughter stood in the sunlight by the window, tall, fragile, and exquisite, her features and outline not unlike her mother's, but frailer, softer, more delicate. The golden light struck one-half of her high-bred, sensitive face, and glimmered upon her thickly-coiled flaxen hair, striking a pinkish tint from her closely-cut costume of fawn-coloured cloth with its dainty cinnamon ruchings. One little soft frill of chiffon nestled round her throat, from which the white, graceful neck and well-poised head shot up

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like a lily amid moss. Her thin white hands were pressed together, and her blue eyes turned beseechingly upon her mother.

"Silly girl! Silly girl!" said the matron, answering that imploring look. She put her hands upon her daughter's sloping shoulders and drew her toward her. "It is a very nice place for a short time. It will be a stepping stone."

"But oh! mamma, in a week! Poor Arthur!"

"He will be happy."

"What! happy to part?"

"He need not part. You shall go with him."

"Oh! mamma!"

"Yes, I say it."

"Oh! mamma, in a week?"

"Yes, indeed. A great deal may be done in a week. I shall order your *trousseau* to-day."

"Oh! you dear, sweet angel! But I am so frightened! And papa? Oh! dear, I am so frightened!"

"Your papa is a diplomatist, dear."

"Yes, ma."

"But, between ourselves, he married a diplomatist too. If he can manage the British Empire, I think that I can manage him, Ida. How long have you been engaged, child?"

"Ten weeks, mamma."

"Then it is quite time it came to a head. Lord Arthur cannot leave England without you. You must go to Tangier as the Minister's wife. Now, you will sit there on the settee, dear, and let me manage entirely. There is Sir William's carriage! I do think that I know how to manage Sir William. James, just ask the doctor to step in this way!"

A heavy, two-horsed carriage had drawn up at the door, and there came a single stately thud

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upon the knocker. An instant afterward the drawing-room door flew open and the footman ushered in the famous physician. He was a small man, clean-shaven, with the old-fashioned black dress and white cravat with high-standing collar. He swung his golden *pince-nez* in his right hand as he walked, and bent forward with a peering, blinking expression, which was somehow suggestive of the dark and complex cases through which he had seen.

"Ah!" said he, as he entered. "My young patient! I am glad of the opportunity."

"Yes, I wish to speak to you about her, Sir William. Pray take this arm-chair."

"Thank you, I will sit beside her," said he, taking his place upon the settee. "She is looking better, less anæmic unquestionably, and a fuller pulse. Quite a little tinge of colour, and yet not hectic."

"I feel stronger, Sir William."

"But she still has the pain in the side."

"Ah, that pain!" He tapped lightly under the collar-bones, and then bent forward with his binaural stethoscope in either ear. "Still a trace of dulness—still a slight crepitation," he murmured.

"You spoke of a change, doctor."

"Yes, certainly a judicious change might be advisable."

"You said a dry climate. I wish to do to the letter what you recommend."

"You have always been model patients."

"We wish to be. You said a dry climate."

"Did I? I rather forget the particulars of our conversation. But a dry climate is certainly indicated."

"Which one?"

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"Well, I think really that a patient should be allowed some latitude. I must not exact too rigid discipline. There is room for individual choice—the Engadine, Central Europe, Egypt, Algiers, which you like."

"I hear that Tangier is also recommended."

"Oh, yes, certainly; it is very dry."

"You hear, Ida? Sir William says that you are to go to Tangier."

"Or any——"

"No, no, Sir William! We feel safest when we are most obedient. You have said Tangier, and we shall certainly try Tangier."

"Really, Lady Charles, your implicit faith is most flattering. It is not everyone who would sacrifice their own plans and inclinations so readily."

"We know your skill and your experience, Sir William. Ida shall try Tangier. I am convinced that she will be benefited."

"I have no doubt of it."

"But you know Lord Charles. He is just a little inclined to decide medical matters as he would an affair of State. I hope that you will be firm with him."

"As long as Lord Charles honours me so far as to ask my advice I am sure that he would not place me in the false position of having that advice disregarded."

The medical baronet whirled round the cord of his *pince-nez* and pushed out a protesting hand.

"No, no, but you must be firm on the point of Tangier."

"Having deliberately formed the opinion that Tangier is the best place for our young patient, I do not think that I shall readily change my conviction."

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"Of course not."

"I shall speak to Lord Charles upon the subject now when I go upstairs."

"Pray do."

"And meanwhile she will continue her present course of treatment. I trust that the warm African air may send her back in a few months with all her energy restored."

He bowed in the courteous, sweeping, old-world fashion which had done so much to build up his ten thousand a year, and, with the stealthy gait of a man whose life is spent in sick-rooms, he followed the footman upstairs.

As the red velvet curtains swept back into position, the Lady Ida threw her arms round her mother's neck and sank her face on to her bosom.

"Oh! mamma, you *are* a diplomatist!" she cried.

But her mother's expression was rather that of the general who looked upon the first smoke of the guns than of one who had won the victory.

"All will be right, dear," said she, glancing down at the fluffy yellow curls and tiny ear. "There is still much to be done, but I think we may venture to order the *trousseau*."

"Oh! how brave you are!"

"Of course, it will in any case be a very quiet affair. Arthur must get the licence. I do not approve of hole-and-corner marriages, but where the gentleman has to take up an official position some allowance must be made. We can have Lady Hilda Edgecombe, and the Trevors, and the Grevvilles, and I am sure that the Prime Minister would run down if he could."

"And papa?"

"Oh, yes; he will come too, if he is well enough."



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We must wait until Sir William goes, and, meanwhile, I shall write to Lord Arthur."

Half an hour had passed, and quite a number of notes had been dashed off in the fine, bold, park-paling handwriting of Lady Charles, when the door clashed, and the wheels of the doctor's carriage were heard grating outside against the curb. Lady Charles laid down her pen, kissed her daughter, and started off for the sick-room. The Foreign Minister was lying back in his chair, with a red silk handkerchief over his forehead, and his bulbous, cotton-wadded foot still protruding upon its rest.

"I think it is almost liniment time," said the lady, shaking a blue crinkled bottle. "Shall I put on a little?"

"Oh! this pestilent toe!" groaned the sufferer. "Sir William won't hear of my moving yet. I do think he is the most completely obstinate and pig-headed man that I have ever met. I tell him that he has mistaken his profession, and that I could find him a post at Constantinople. We need a mule out there."

"Poor Sir William!" laughed Lady Charles. "But how has he roused your wrath?"

"He is so persistent—so dogmatic."

"Upon what point?"

"Well, he has been laying down the law about Ida. He has decreed, it seems, that she is to go to Tangier."

"He said something to that effect before he went up to you."

"Oh, he did, did he?"

The slow-moving, inscrutable eye came sliding round to her.

The lady's face had assumed an expression of transparent obvious innocence, an intrusive can-

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dour which is never seen in nature save when a woman is bent upon deception.

"He examined her lungs, Charles. He did not say much, but his expression was very grave."

"Not to say owlish," interrupted the Minister.

"No, no, Charles; it is no laughing matter. He said that she must have a change. I am sure that he thought more than he said. He spoke of dullness and crepitation, and the effects of the African air. Then the talk turned upon dry, bracing health resorts, and he agreed that Tangier was the place. He said that even a few months there would work a change."

"And that was all?"

"Yes, that was all."

Lord Charles shrugged his shoulders with the air of a man who is but half convinced.

"But, of course," said the lady, serenely, "if you think it better that Ida should not go she shall not. The only thing is that if she should get worse we might feel a little uncomfortable afterward. In a weakness of that sort a very short time may make a difference. Sir William evidently thought the matter critical. Still, there is no reason why he should influence you. It is a little responsibility, however. If you take it all upon yourself and free me from any of it, so that afterward——"

"My dear Clara, how you do croak!"

"Oh! I don't wish to do that, Charles. But you remember what happened to Lord Bellamy's child. She was just Ida's age. That was another case in which Sir William's advice was disregarded."

Lord Charles groaned impatiently.

"I have not disregarded it," said he.

"No, no, of course not. I know your strong sense, and your good heart too well, dear. You

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were very wisely looking at both sides of the question. That is what we poor women cannot do. It is emotion against reason, as I have often heard you say. We are swayed this way and that, but you men are persistent, and so you gain your way with us. But I am so pleased that you have decided for Tangier."

"Have I?"

"Well, dear, you said that you would not disregard Sir William."

"Well, Clara, admitting that Ida is to go to Tangier, you will allow that it is impossible for me to escort her?"

"Utterly."

"And for you?"

"While you are ill my place is by your side."

"There is your sister?"

"She is going to Florida."

"Lady Dumbarton, then?"

"She is nursing her father. It is out of the question."

"Well, then, whom can we possibly ask? Especially just as the season is commencing. You see, Clara, the fates fight against Sir William."

His wife rested her elbows against the back of the great red chair, and passed her fingers through the statesman's grizzled curls, stooping down as she did so until her lips were close to his ear.

"There is Lord Arthur Sibthorpe," said she softly.

Lord Charles bounded in his chair, and muttered a word or two such as were more frequently heard from Cabinet Ministers in Lord Melbourne's time than now.

"Are you mad, Clara!" he cried. "What can have put such a thought into your head?"

"The Prime Minister."

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"Who? The Prime Minister?"

"Yes, dear. Now do, do be good! Or perhaps I had better not speak to you about it any more."

"Well, I really think that you have gone rather too far to retreat."

"It was the Prime Minister, then, who told me that Lord Arthur was going to Tangier."

"It is a fact, though it had escaped my memory for the instant."

"And then came Sir William with his advice about Ida. Oh! Charlie, it is surely more than a coincidence!"

"I am convinced," said Lord Charles, with his shrewd, questioning gaze, "that it is very much more than a coincidence. You are a very clever woman, my dear. A born manager and organiser."

The lady brushed past the compliment.

"Think of our own young days, Charlie," she whispered, with her fingers still toying with his hair. "What were you then? A poor man, not even Ambassador at Tangier. But I loved you, and believed in you, and have I ever regretted it? Ida loves and believes in Lord Arthur, and why should she ever regret it either?"

Lord Charles was silent. His eyes were fixed upon the green branches which waved outside the window; but his mind had flashed back to a Devonshire country-house of thirty years ago, and to the one fateful evening when, between old yew hedges, he paced along beside a slender girl, and poured out to her his hopes, his fears, and his ambitions. He took the white, thin hand and pressed it to his lips.

"You have been a good wife to me, Clara," said he.

She said nothing. She did not attempt to im-

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prove upon her advantage. A less consummate general might have tried to do so, and ruined all. She stood silent and submissive, noting the quick play of thought which peeped from his eyes and lip. There was a sparkle in the one and a twitch of amusement in the other, as he at last glanced up at her.

"Clara," said he, "deny it if you can! You have ordered the *trousseau*."

She gave his ear a little pinch.

"Subject to your approval," said she.

"You have written to the Archbishop."

"It is not posted yet."

"You have sent a note to Lord Arthur."

"How could you tell that?"

"He is downstairs now."

"No; but I think that is his brougham."

Lord Charles sank back with a look of half-comical despair.

"Who is to fight against such a woman?" he cried. "Oh! if I could send you to Novikoff! He is too much for any of my men. But, Clara, I cannot have them up here."

"Not for your blessing?"

"No, no!"

"It would make them so happy."

"I cannot stand scenes."

"Then I shall convey it to them."

"And pray say no more about it—to-day, at any rate. I have been weak over the matter."

"Oh! Charlie, you who are so strong!"

"You have outflanked me, Clara. It was very well done. I must congratulate you."

"Well," she murmured, as she kissed him, "you know I have been studying a very clever diplomatist for thirty years."

## A MEDICAL DOCUMENT

MEDICAL men are, as a class, very much too busy to take stock of singular situations or dramatic events. Thus it happens that the ablest chronicler of their experiences in our literature was a lawyer. A life spent in watching over death-beds—or over birth-beds, which are infinitely more trying—takes something from a man's sense of proportion, as constant strong waters might corrupt his palate. The overstimulated nerve ceases to respond. Ask the surgeon for his best experiences and he may reply that he has seen little that is remarkable, or break away into the technical. But catch him some night when the fire has spurted up and his pipe is reeking, with a few of his brother practitioners for company and an artful question or allusion to set him going. Then you will get some raw, green facts new plucked from the tree of life.

It is after one of the quarterly dinners of the Midland Branch of the British Medical Association. Twenty coffee cups, a dozen liqueur glasses, and a solid bank of blue smoke which swirls slowly along the high, gilded ceiling gives a hint of a successful gathering. But the members have shredded off to their homes. The line of heavy, bulge-pocketed overcoats and of stethoscope-bearing top hats is gone from the hotel corridor. Round the fire in the sitting-room three medicos are still lingering, however, all smoking and arguing, while a fourth, who is a mere layman and young at that, sits back

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at the table. Under cover of an open journal he is writing furiously with a stylographic pen, asking a question in an innocent voice from time to time and so flickering up the conversation whenever it shows a tendency to wane.

The three men are all of that staid middle age which begins early and lasts late in the profession. They are none of them famous, yet each is of good repute, and a fair type of his particular branch. The portly man with the authoritative manner and the white, vitriol splash upon his cheek is Charley Manson, chief of the Wormley Asylum, and author of the brilliant monograph—"Obscure Nervous Lesions in the Unmarried." He always wears his collar high like that, since the half-successful attempt of a student of Revelations to cut his throat with a splinter of glass. The second, with the ruddy face and the merry brown eyes, is a general practitioner, a man of vast experience, who, with his three assistants and his five horses, takes twenty-five hundred a year in half-crown visits and shilling consultations out of the poorest quarter of a great city. That cheery face of Theodore Foster is seen at the side of a hundred sick-beds a day, and if he has one-third more names on his visiting list than in his cash book he always promises himself that he will get level some day when a millionaire with a chronic complaint—the ideal combination—shall seek his services. The third, sitting on the right with his dress-shoes shining on the top of the fender, is Hargrave, the rising surgeon. His face has none of the broad humanity of Theodore Foster's, the eye is stern and critical, the mouth straight and severe, but there is strength and decision in every line of it, and it is nerve rather than sympathy

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which the patient demands when he is bad enough to come to Hargrave's door. He calls himself a jawman, "a mere jawman," as he modestly puts it, but in point of fact he is too young and too poor to confine himself to a specialty, and there is nothing surgical which Hargrave has not the skill and the audacity to do.

"Before, after, and during," murmurs the general practitioner in answer to some interpolation of the outsider's. "I assure you, Manson, one sees all sorts of evanescent forms of madness."

"Ah, puerperal!" throws in the other, knocking the curved grey ash from his cigar. "But you had some case in your mind, Foster."

"Well, there was one only last week which was new to me. I had been engaged by some people of the name of Silcoe. When the trouble came round I went myself, for they would not hear of an assistant. The husband who was a policeman, was sitting at the head of the bed on the further side. 'This won't do,' said I. 'Oh yes, doctor, it must do,' said she. 'It's quite irregular, and he must go,' said I. 'It's that or nothing,' said she. 'I won't open my mouth or stir a finger the whole night,' said he. So it ended by my allowing him to remain, and there he sat for eight hours on end. She was very good over the matter, but every now and again *he* would fetch a hollow groan, and I noticed that he held his right hand just under the sheet all the time, where I had no doubt that it was clasped by her left. When it was all happily over, I looked at him and his face was the colour of this cigar ash, and his head had dropped on to the edge of the pillow. Of course I thought he had fainted with emotion, and I was



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just telling myself what I thought of myself for having been such a fool as to let him stay there, when suddenly I saw that the sheet over his hand was all soaked with blood ; I whisked it down, and there was the fellow's wrist half cut through. The woman had one bracelet of a policeman's handcuff over her left wrist and the other round his right one. When she had been in pain she had twisted with all her strength and the iron had fairly eaten into the bone of the man's arm. 'Aye, doctor,' said she, when she saw I had noticed it. 'He's got to take his share as well as me. Turn and turn,' said she.

"Don't you find it a very wearing branch of the profession?" asks Foster after a pause.

"My dear fellow, it was the fear of it that drove me into lunacy work."

"Aye, and it has driven men into asylums who never found their way on to the medical staff. I was a very shy fellow myself as a student, and I know what it means."

"No joke that in general practice," says the alienist.

"Well, you hear men talk about it as though it were, but I tell you it's much nearer tragedy. Take some poor, raw, young fellow who has just put up his plate in a strange town. He has found it a trial all his life, perhaps, to talk to a woman about lawn tennis and church services. When a young man is shy he is shyer than any girl. Then down comes an anxious mother and consults him upon the most intimate family matters. 'I shall never go to that doctor again,' says she afterward. 'His manner is so stiff and unsympathetic.' Unsympathetic! Why, the poor lad was struck dumb and

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paralysed. I have known general practitioners who were so shy that they could not bring themselves to ask the way in the street. Fancy what sensitive men like that must endure before they get broken in to medical practice. And then they know that nothing is so catching as shyness, and that if they do not keep a face of stone, their patient will be covered with confusion. And so they keep their face of stone, and earn the reputation perhaps of having a heart to correspond. I suppose nothing would shake *your* nerve, Manson."

"Well, when a man lives year in year out among a thousand lunatics, with a fair sprinkling of homicidals among them, one's nerves either get set or shattered. Mine are all right so far."

"I was frightened once," says the surgeon. "It was when I was doing dispensary work. One night I had a call from some very poor people, and gathered from the few words they said that their child was ill. When I entered the room I saw a small cradle in the corner. Raising the lamp I walked over and putting back the curtains I looked down at the baby. I tell you it was sheer Providence that I didn't drop that lamp and set the whole place alight. The head on the pillow turned, and I saw a face looking up at me which seemed to me to have more malignancy and wickedness than ever I had dreamed of in a nightmare. It was the flush of red over the cheek-bones, and the brooding eyes full of loathing of me, and of everything else, that impressed me. I'll never forget my start as, instead of the chubby face of an infant, my eyes fell upon this creature. I took the mother into the next room. 'What is it?' I asked. 'A girl of sixteen,' said she, and then

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throwing up her arms, 'Oh, pray God she may be taken!' The poor thing, though she spent her life in this little cradle, had great, long, thin limbs which she curled up under her. I lost sight of the case and don't know what became of it, but I'll never forget the look in her eyes."

"That's creepy," says Dr. Foster. "But I think one of my experiences would run it close. Shortly after I put up my plate I had a visit from a little hunch-backed woman, who wished me to come and attend to her sister, who was very ill. When I reached the house, which was a very poor one, I found two other little hunch-backed women, exactly like the first, waiting for me in the sitting-room. Not one of them said a word, but my companion took the lamp and walked upstairs with her two sisters behind her, and me bringing up the rear. I can see those three queer shadows cast by the lamp upon the wall as clearly as I can see that tobacco pouch. In the room above was the fourth sister, a remarkably beautiful girl in such a state that it would be inhuman to leave her. The three deformed sisters seated themselves round the room, like so many graven images, and all night not one of them opened her mouth. I'm not romancing, Hargrave; this is absolute fact. In the early morning a fearful thunderstorm broke out, one of the most violent I have ever known. The little garret burned blue with the lightning, and the thunder roared and rattled as if it were on the very roof of the house. It wasn't much of a lamp I had, and it was a queer thing when a spurt of lightning came to see those three twisted figures sitting round the walls, or to have the voice of my patient drowned by the booming of the thunder.

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By Jove, I don't mind telling you that there was a time when I nearly bolted from the room. All came right in the end, but I never heard the true story of the mysterious beauty and her three crippled sisters."

"That's the worst of these medical stories," sighs the outsider. "They never seem to have an end."

"When a man is up to his neck in practice, my boy, he has no time to gratify his private curiosity. Things shoot across him and he gets a glimpse of them, only to recall them, perhaps, at some quiet moment like this. But I've always felt, Manson, that your line had as much of the terrible in it as any other."

"More," groans the alienist. "A disease of the body is bad enough, but this seems to be a disease of the soul. Is it not a shocking thing—a thing to drive a reasoning man into absolute Materialism—to think that you may have a fine, noble fellow with every divine instinct and that some little vascular change, the dropping, we will say, of a minute spicule of bone from the inner table of his skull on to the surface of his brain may have the effect of changing him to a filthy and pitiable creature with every low and debasing tendency? What a satire an asylum is upon the majesty of man, and no less upon the ethereal nature of the soul."

"Faith and hope," murmurs the general practitioner.

"I have no faith, not much hope, and all the charity I can afford," says the surgeon. "When theology squares itself with the facts of life I'll read it up."

"You were talking about cases," says the out-

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sider, jerking the ink down into his stylographic pen.

"Well, take a common complaint which kills many thousands every year, like G.P. for instance."

"What's G.P.?"

"General practitioner," suggests the surgeon with a grin.

"The British public will have to know what G.P. is," says the alienist gravely. "It's increasing by leaps and bounds, and it has the distinction of being absolutely incurable. General paralysis is its full title, and I tell you it promises to be a perfect scourge. Here's a fairly typical case now which I saw last Monday week. A young farmer, a splendid fellow, surprised his friends by taking a very rosy view of things at a time when the whole country-side was grumbling. He was going to give up wheat, give up arable land, too, if it didn't pay, plant two thousand acres of rhododendrons and get a monopoly of the supply for Covent Garden—there was no end to his schemes, all sane enough but just a bit inflated. I called at the farm, not to see him, but on an altogether different matter. Something about the man's way of talking struck me and I watched him narrowly. His lip had a trick of quivering, his words slurred themselves together, and so did his handwriting when he had occasion to draw up a small agreement. A closer inspection showed me that one of his pupils was ever so little larger than the other. As I left the house his wife came after me. 'Isn't it splendid to see Job looking so well, doctor?' said she; 'he's that full of energy he can hardly keep himself quiet.' I did not say anything, for I had not the heart, but I knew that the fellow was as much con-

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demned to death as though he were lying in the cell at Newgate. It was a characteristic case of incipient G.P."

"Good heavens!" cries the outsider. "My own lips tremble. I often slur my words. I believe I've got it myself."

Three little chuckles come from the front of the fire.

"There's the danger of a little medical knowledge to the layman."

"A great authority has said that every first year's student is suffering in silent agony from four diseases," remarks the surgeon. "One is heart disease, of course; another is cancer of the parotid. I forget the two other."

"Where does the parotid come in?"

"Oh, it's the last wisdom tooth coming through!"

"And what would be the end of that young farmer?" asks the outsider.

"Paresis of all the muscles, ending in fits, coma and death. It may be a few months, it may be a year or two. He was a very strong young man and would take some killing."

"By the way," says the alienist, "did I ever tell you about the first certificate I ever signed? I stood as near ruin then as a man could go."

"What was it, then?"

"I was in practice at the time. One morning a Mrs. Cooper called upon me and informed me that her husband had shown signs of delusions lately. They took the form of imagining that he had been in the army and had distinguished himself very much. As a matter of fact he was a lawyer and had never been out of England. Mrs. Cooper was of opinion that if I were to call it might alarm him,

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so it was agreed between us that she should send him up in the evening on some pretext to my consulting-room, which would give me the opportunity of having a chat with him and, if I were convinced of his insanity, of signing his certificate. Another doctor had already signed, so that it only needed my concurrence to have him placed under treatment. Well, Mr. Cooper arrived in the evening about half an hour before I had expected him, and consulted me as to some malarious symptoms from which he said that he suffered. According to his account he had just returned from the Abyssinian Campaign, and had been one of the first of the British forces to enter Magdala. No delusion could possibly be more marked, for he would talk of little else, so I filled in the papers without the slightest hesitation. When his wife arrived, after he had left, I put some questions to her to complete the form. 'What is his age?' I asked. 'Fifty,' said she. 'Fifty!' I cried. 'Why, the man I examined could not have been more than thirty!' And so it came out that the real Mr. Cooper had never called upon me at all, but that by one of those coincidences which take a man's breath away another Cooper, who really was a very distinguished young officer of artillery, had come in to consult me. My pen was wet to sign the paper when I discovered it," says Dr. Manson, mopping his forehead.

"We were talking about nerve just now," observes the surgeon. "Just after my qualifying I served in the Navy for a time, as I think you know. I was on the flag-ship on the West African Station, and I remember a singular example of nerve which came to my notice at that time. One of

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our small gunboats had gone up the Calabar river, and while there the surgeon died of coast fever. On the same day a man's leg was broken by a spar falling upon it, and it became quite obvious that it must be taken off above the knee if his life was to be saved. The young lieutenant who was in charge of the craft searched among the dead doctor's effects and laid his hands upon some chloroform, a hip-joint knife, and a volume of Grey's Anatomy. He had the man laid by the steward upon the cabin table, and with a picture of a cross section of the thigh in front of him he began to take off the limb. Every now and then, referring to the diagram, he would say: 'Stand by with the lashings, steward. There's blood on the chart about here.' Then he would jab with his knife until he cut the artery, and he and his assistant would tie it up before they went any further. In this way they gradually whittled the leg off, and upon my word they made a very excellent job of it. The man is hopping about the Portsmouth Hard at this day.

"It's no joke when the doctor of one of these isolated gunboats himself falls ill," continues the surgeon after a pause. "You might think it easy for him to prescribe for himself, but this fever knocks you down like a club, and you haven't strength left to brush a mosquito off your face. I had a touch of it at Lagos, and I know what I am telling you. But there was a chum of mine who really had a curious experience. The whole crew gave him up, and, as they had never had a funeral aboard the ship, they began rehearsing the forms so as to be ready. They thought that he was unconscious, but he swears he could hear every word



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that passed. 'Corpse comin' up the 'atchway!' cried the cockney sergeant of Marines. 'Present harms!' He was so amused, and so indignant too, that he just made up his mind that he wouldn't be carried through that hatchway, and he wasn't, either."

"There's no need for fiction in medicine," remarks Foster, "for the facts will always beat anything you can fancy. But it has seemed to me sometimes that a curious paper might be read at some of these meetings about the uses of medicine in popular fiction."

"How?"

"Well, of what the folk die of, and what diseases are made most use of in novels. Some are worn to pieces, and others, which are equally common in real life, are never mentioned. Typhoid is fairly frequent, but scarlet fever is unknown. Heart disease is common, but then heart disease, as we know it, is usually the sequel of some foregoing disease, of which we never hear anything in the romance. Then there is the mysterious malady called brain fever, which always attacks the heroine after a crisis, but which is unknown under that name to the text books. People when they are over-excited in novels fall down in a fit. In a fairly large experience I have never known anyone to do so in real life. The small complaints simply don't exist. Nobody ever gets shingles or quinsy, or mumps in a novel. All the diseases, too, belong to the upper part of the body. The novelist never strikes below the belt."

"I'll tell you what, Foster," says the alienist, "there is a side of life which is too medical for the general public and too romantic for the professional

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journals, but which contains some of the richest human materials that a man could study. It's not a pleasant side, I am afraid, but if it is good enough for Providence to create, it is good enough for us to try and understand. It would deal with strange outbursts of savagery and vice in the lives of the best men, curious momentary weaknesses in the record of the sweetest women, known but to one or two, and inconceivable to the world around. It would deal, too, with the singular phenomena of waxing and of waning manhood, and would throw a light upon those actions which have cut short many an honoured career and sent a man to a prison when he should have been hurried to a consulting-room. Of all evils that may come upon the sons of men, God shield us principally from that one!"

"I had a case some little time ago which was out of the ordinary," says the surgeon. "There's a famous beauty in London Society—I mention no names—who used to be remarkable a few seasons ago for the very low dresses which she would wear. She had the whitest of skins, and most beautiful of shoulders, so it was no wonder. Then gradually the frilling at her neck lapped upward and upward, until last year she astonished everyone by wearing quite a high collar at a time when it was completely out of fashion. Well, one day this very woman was shown into my consulting-room. When the footman was gone she suddenly tore off the upper part of her dress. 'For God's sake do something for me!' she cried. Then I saw what the trouble was. A rodent ulcer was eating its way upward, coiling on in its serpiginous fashion until the end of it was flush with her collar. The red streak of its trail was lost below the line of

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her bust. Year by year it had ascended and she had heightened her dress to hide it, until now it was about to invade her face. She had been too proud to confess her trouble, even to a medical man."

"And did you stop it?"

"Well, with zinc chloride I did what I could. But it may break out again. She was one of those beautiful white-and-pink creatures who are rotten with struma. You may patch but you can't mend."

"Dear! dear! dear!" cries the general practitioner, with that kindly softening of the eyes which had endeared him to so many thousands. "I suppose we mustn't think ourselves wiser than Providence, but there are times when one feels that something is wrong in the scheme of things. I've seen some sad things in my life. Did I ever tell you that case where Nature divorced a most loving couple? He was a fine young fellow, an athlete and a gentleman, but he overdid athletics. You know how the force that controls us gives us a little tweak to remind us when we get off the beaten track. It may be a pinch on the great toe if we drink too much and work too little. Or it may be a tug on our nerves if we dissipate energy too much. With the athlete, of course, it's the heart or the lungs. He had bad phthisis and was sent to Davos. Well, as luck would have it, she developed rheumatic fever, which left her heart very much affected. Now, do you see the dreadful dilemma in which those poor people found themselves? When he came below 4000 feet or so, his symptoms became terrible. She could come up about 2500, and then her heart reached its

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limit. They had several interviews half way down the valley, which left them nearly dead, and at last the doctors had to absolutely forbid it. And so for four years they lived within three miles of each other and never met. Every morning he would go to a place which overlooked the chalet in which she lived and would wave a great white cloth and she answer from below. They could see each other quite plainly with their field glasses, and they might have been in different planets for all their chance of meeting."

"And one at last died," says the outsider.

"No, sir. I'm sorry not to be able to clinch the story, but the man recovered and is now a successful stockbroker in Drapers Gardens. The woman, too, is the mother of a considerable family. But what are you doing there?"

"Only taking a note or two of your talk."

The three medical men laugh as they walk toward their overcoats.

"Why, we've done nothing but talk shop," says the general practitioner. "What possible interest can the public take in that?"

LOT NO. 249

OF the dealings of Edward Bellingham with William Monkhouse Lee, and of the cause of the great terror of Abercrombie Smith, it may be that no absolute and final judgment will ever be delivered. It is true that we have the full and clear narrative of Smith himself, and such corroboration as he could look for from Thomas Styles the servant, from the Reverend Plumptree Peterson, Fellow of Old's and from such other people as chanced to gain some passing glance at this or that incident in a singular chain of events. Yet, in the main, the story must rest upon Smith alone, and the most will think that it is more likely that one brain, however outwardly sane, has some subtle warp in its texture, some strange flaw in its workings, than that the path of nature has been overstepped in open day in so famed a centre of learning and light as this English University. Yet when we think how narrow and how devious this path of Nature is, how dimly we can trace it, for all our lamps of science, and how from the darkness which girds it round great and terrible possibilities loom ever shadowily upward, it is a bold and confident man who will put a limit to the strange by-paths into which the human spirit may wander.

In a certain wing of what we will call Old College there is a corner turret of an exceeding great age. The heavy arch which spans the open door has bent downward in the centre under the weight

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of its years, and the grey, lichen-blotched blocks of stone are bound and knitted together with withes and strands of ivy, as though the old mother had set herself to brace them up against wind and weather. From the door a stone stair curves upward spirally, passing two landings, and terminating in a third one, its steps all shapeless and hollowed by the tread of so many generations of the seekers after knowledge. Life has flowed like water down this winding stair, and, waterlike, has left these smooth-worn grooves behind it. From the long-gowned, pedantic scholars of Plantagenet days down to the young bloods of a later age, how full and strong had been that tide of young English life. And what was left now of all those hopes, those strivings, those fiery energies, save here and there in some old-world churchyard a few scratches upon a stone, and perchance a handful of dust in a mouldering coffin? Yet here were the silent stair and the grey old wall, with bend and saltire and many another heraldic device still to be read upon its surface, like grotesque shadows thrown back from the days that had passed.

In the month of May, in the year 1884, three young men occupied the sets of rooms which opened on to the separate landings of the old stair. Each set consisted simply of a sitting-room and of a bedroom, while the two corresponding rooms upon the ground-floor were used, the one as a coal-cellar, and the other as the living-room of the servant, Thomas Styles, whose duty it was to wait upon the three men above him. To right and to left was a line of lecture-rooms and of offices, so that the dwellers in the old turret enjoyed a certain seclusion, which made the chambers popular

among the more studious undergraduates. Such were the three who occupied them now—Abercrombie Smith above, Edward Bellingham beneath him, and William Monkhouse Lee upon the lowest story.

It was ten o'clock on a bright spring night, and Abercrombie Smith lay back in his arm-chair, his feet upon the fender, and his briar-root pipe between his lips. In a similar chair, and equally at his ease, there lounged on the other side of the fireplace his old school friend Jephro Hastie. Both men were in flannels, for they had spent their evening upon the river, but apart from their dress no one could look at their hard-cut, alert faces without seeing that they were open-air men—men whose minds and tastes turned naturally to all that was manly and robust. Hastie, indeed, was stroke of his college boat, and Smith was an even better oar, but a coming examination had already cast its shadow over him and held him to his work, save for the few hours a week which health demanded. A litter of medical books upon the table, with scattered bones, models and anatomical plates, pointed to the extent as well as the nature of his studies, while a couple of single-sticks and a set of boxing-gloves above the mantel-piece hinted at the means by which, with Hastie's help, he might take his exercise in its most compressed and least distant form. They knew each other very well—so well that they could sit now in that soothing silence which is the very highest development of companionship.

"Have some whisky," said Abercrombie Smith at last between two cloudbursts. "Scotch in the jug and Irish in the bottle."

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"No, thanks. I'm in for the skulls. I don't liquor when I'm training. How about you?"

"I'm reading hard. I think it best to leave it alone."

Hastie nodded, and they relapsed into a contented silence.

"By the way, Smith," asked Hastie, presently, "have you made the acquaintance of either of the fellows on your stair yet?"

"Just a nod when we pass. Nothing more."

"Hum! I should be inclined to let it stand at that. I know something of them both. Not much, but as much as I want. I don't think I should take them to my bosom if I were you. Not that there's much amiss with Monkhouse Lee."

"Meaning the thin one?"

"Precisely. He is a gentlemanly little fellow. I don't think there is any vice in him. But then you can't know him without knowing Bellingham."

"Meaning the fat one?"

"Yes, the fat one. And he's a man whom I, for one, would rather not know."

Abercrombie Smith raised his eyebrows and glanced across at his companion.

"What's up, then?" he asked. "Drink? Cards? Cad? You used not to be censorious."

"Ah! you evidently don't know the man, or you wouldn't ask. There's something damnable about him—something reptilian. My gorge always rises at him. I should put him down as a man with secret vices—an evil liver. He's no fool, though. They say that he is one of the best men in his line that they have ever had in the college."



"Medicine or classics?"

"Eastern languages. He's a demon at them. Chillingworth met him somewhere above the second cataract last long, and he told me that he just prattled to the Arabs as if he had been born and nursed and weaned among them. He talked Coptic to the Copts, and Hebrew to the Jews, and Arabic to the Bedouins, and they were all ready to kiss the hem of his frock-coat. There are some old hermit Johnnies up in those parts who sit on rocks and scowl and spit at the casual stranger. Well, when they saw this chap Bellingham, before he had said five words they just lay down on their bellies and wriggled. Chillingworth said that he never saw anything like it. Bellingham seemed to take it as his right, too, and strutted about among them and talked down to them like a Dutch uncle. Pretty good for an undergrad. of Old's, wasn't it?"

"Why do you say you can't know Lee without knowing Bellingham?"

"Because Bellingham is engaged to his sister Eveline. Such a bright little girl, Smith! I know the whole family well. It's disgusting to see that brute with her. A toad and a dove, that's what they always remind me of."

Abercrombie Smith grinned and knocked his ashes out against the side of the grate.

"You show every card in your hand, old chap," said he. "What a prejudiced, green-eyed, evil-thinking old man it is! You have really nothing against the fellow except that."

"Well, I've known her ever since she was as long as that cherry-wood pipe, and I don't like to see her taking risks. And it is a risk. He looks beastly. And he has a beastly temper, a venomous

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temper. You remember his row with Long Norton?"

"No; you always forget that I am a freshman."

"Ah, it was last winter. Of course. Well, you know the towpath along by the river. There were several fellows going along it, Bellingham in front, when they came on an old market-woman coming the other way. It had been raining—you know what those fields are like when it has rained—and the path ran between the river and a great puddle that was nearly as broad. Well, what does this swine do but keep the path, and push the old girl into the mud, where she and her marketings came to terrible grief. It was a blackguard thing to do, and Long Norton, who is as gentle a fellow as ever stepped, told him what he thought of it. One word led to another, and it ended in Norton laying his stick across the fellow's shoulders. There was the deuce of a fuss about it, and it's a treat to see the way in which Bellingham looks at Norton when they meet now. By Jove, Smith, it's nearly eleven o'clock!"

"No hurry. Light your pipe again."

"Not I. I'm supposed to be in training. Here I've been sitting gossiping when I ought to have been safely tucked up. I'll borrow your skull, if you can share it. Williams has had mine for a month. I'll take the little bones of your ear, too, if you are sure you won't need them. Thanks very much. Never mind a bag, I can carry them very well under my arm. Good-night, my son, and take my tip as to your neighbour."

When Hastie, bearing his anatomical plunder, had clattered off down the winding stair, Abercrombie Smith hurled his pipe into the waste-paper

basket, and drawing his chair nearer to the lamp, plunged into a formidable green-covered volume, adorned with great coloured maps of that strange internal kingdom of which we are the hapless and helpless monarchs. Though a freshman at the College, the student was not so in medicine, for he had worked for four years at Glasgow and at Berlin, and this coming examination would place him finally as a member of his profession. With his firm mouth, broad forehead, and clear-cut, somewhat hard-featured face, he was a man who, if he had no brilliant talent, was yet so dogged, so patient, and so strong that he might in the end overtop a more showy genius. A man who can hold his own among Scotchmen and North Germans is not a man to be easily set back. Smith had left a name at Glasgow and at Berlin, and he was bent now upon doing as much, if hard work and devotion could accomplish it.

He had sat reading for about an hour, and the hands of the noisy carriage clock upon the side table were rapidly closing together upon the twelve, when a sudden sound fell upon the student's ear—a sharp, rather shrill sound, like the hissing intake of a man's breath who gasps under some strong emotion. Smith laid down his book and slanted his ear to listen. There was no one on either side or above him, so that the interruption came certainly from the neighbour beneath—the same neighbour of whom Hastie had given so unsavoury an account. Smith knew him only as a flabby, pale-faced man of silent and studious habits, a man whose lamp threw a golden bar from the old turret even after he had extinguished his own. This community in lateness had formed a certain silent bond

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between them. It was soothing to Smith when the hours stole on toward dawning to feel that there was another so close who set as small a value upon his sleep as he did. Even now, as his thoughts turned toward him, Smith's feelings were kindly. Hastie was a good fellow, but he was rough, strong-fibred, with no imagination or sympathy. He could not tolerate departures from what he looked upon as the model type of manliness. If a man could not be measured by a public-school standard, then he was beyond the pale with Hastie. Like so many who are themselves robust, he was apt to confuse the constitution with the character, to ascribe to want of principle what was really a want of circulation. Smith, with his stronger mind, knew his friend's habit, and made allowance for it now as his thoughts turned toward the man beneath him.

There was no return of the singular sound, and Smith was about to turn to his work once more, when suddenly there broke out in the silence of the night a hoarse cry, a positive scream—the call of a man who is moved and shaken beyond all control. Smith sprang out of his chair and dropped his book. He was a man of fairly firm fibre, but there was something in this sudden, uncontrollable shriek of horror which chilled his blood and pringled in his skin. Coming in such a place and at such an hour, it brought a thousand fantastic possibilities into his head. Should he rush down, or was it better to wait? He had all the national hatred of making a scene, and he knew so little of his neighbour that he would not lightly intrude upon his affairs. For a moment he stood in doubt and even as he balanced the matter there was a quick rattle of footsteps upon the stairs, and young Monkhouse Lee,

half dressed and as white as ashes, burst into his room.

"Come down!" he gasped. "Bellingham's ill."

Abercrombie Smith followed him closely down stairs into the sitting-room which was beneath his own, and intent as he was upon the matter in hand, he could not but take an amazed glance around him as he crossed the threshold. It was such a chamber as he had never seen before—a museum rather than a study. Walls and ceiling were thickly covered with a thousand strange relics from Egypt and the East. Tall, angular figures bearing burdens or weapons stalked in an uncouth frieze round the apartments. Above were bull-headed, stork-headed, cat-headed, owl-headed statues, with viper-crowned, almond-eyed monarchs, and strange, beetle-like deities cut out of the blue Egyptian lapis lazuli. Horus and Isis and Osiris peeped down from every niche and shelf, while across the ceiling a true son of Old Nile, a great, hanging-jawed crocodile, was slung in a double noose.

In the centre of this singular chamber was a large, square table, littered with papers, bottles, and the dried leaves of some graceful, palm-like plant. These varied objects had all been heaped together in order to make room for a mummy case, which had been conveyed from the wall, as was evident from the gap there, and laid across the front of the table. The mummy itself, a horrid, black, withered thing, like a charred head on a gnarled bush, was lying half out of the case, with its claw-like hand and bony forearm resting upon the table. Propped up against the sarcophagus was an old yellow scroll of papyrus, and in front of it, in a wooden arm-chair, sat the owner of the room, his

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head thrown back, his widely-opened eyes directed in a horrified stare to the crocodile above him, and his blue, thick lips puffing loudly with every expiration.

"My God! he's dying!" cried Monkhouse Lee distractedly.

He was a slim, handsome young fellow, olive-skinned and dark-eyed, of a Spanish rather than of an English type, with a Celtic intensity of manner which contrasted with the Saxon phlegm of Abercrombie Smith.

"Only a faint, I think," said the medical student. "Just give me a hand with him. You take his feet. Now on to the sofa. Can you kick all those little wooden devils off? What a litter it is! Now he will be all right if we undo his collar and give him some water. What has he been up to at all?"

"I don't know. I heard him cry out. I ran up. I know him pretty well, you know. It is very good of you to come down."

"His heart is going like a pair of castanets," said Smith, laying his hand on the breast of the unconscious man. "He seems to me to be frightened all to pieces. Chuck the water over him! What a face he has got on him!"

It was indeed a strange and most repellent face, for colour and outline were equally unnatural. It was white, not with the ordinary pallor of fear, but with an absolutely bloodless white, like the under side of a sole. He was very fat, but gave the impression of having at some time been considerably fatter, for his skin hung loosely in creases and folds, and was shot with a meshwork of wrinkles. Short, stubbly brown hair bristled up from his scalp, with a pair of thick, wrinkled ears protrud-

ing on either side. His light grey eyes were still open, the pupils dilated and the balls projecting in a fixed and horrid stare. It seemed to Smith as he looked down upon him that he had never seen nature's danger signals flying so plainly upon a man's countenance, and his thoughts turned more seriously to the warning which Hastie had given him an hour before.

"What the deuce can have frightened him so?" he asked.

"It's the mummy."

"The mummy? How, then?"

"I don't know. It's beastly and morbid. I wish he would drop it. It's the second fright he has given me. It was the same last winter. I found him just like this, with that horrid thing in front of him."

"What does he want with the mummy, then?"

"Oh, he's a crank, you know. It's his hobby. He knows more about these things than any man in England. But I wish he wouldn't! Ah, he's beginning to come to."

A faint tinge of colour had begun to steal back into Bellingham's ghastly cheeks, and his eyelids shivered like a sail after a calm. He clasped and unclasped his hands, drew a long, thin breath between his teeth, and suddenly jerking up his head, threw a glance of recognition around him. As his eyes fell upon the mummy, he sprang off the sofa, seized the roll of papyrus, thrust it into a drawer, turned the key, and then staggered back on to the sofa.

"What's up?" he asked. "What do you chaps want?"

"You've been shrieking out and making no end

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of a fuss," said Monkhouse Lee. "If our neighbour here from above hadn't come down, I'm sure I don't know what I should have done with you."

"Ah, it's Abercrombie Smith," said Bellingham, glancing up at him. "How very good of you to come in! What a fool I am! Oh, my God, what a fool I am!"

He sunk his head on to his hands, and burst into peal after peal of hysterical laughter.

"Look here! Drop it!" cried Smith, shaking him roughly by the shoulder.

"Your nerves are all in a jangle. You must drop these little midnight games with mummies, or you'll be going off your chump. You're all on wires now."

"I wonder," said Bellingham, "whether you would be as cool as I am if you had seen——"

"What then?"

"Oh, nothing. I meant that I wonder if you could sit up at night with a mummy without trying your nerves. I have no doubt that you are quite right. I dare say that I have been taking it out of myself too much lately. But I am all right now. Please don't go, though. Just wait for a few minutes until I am quite myself."

"The room is very close," remarked Lee, throwing open the window and letting in the cool night air.

"It's balsamic resin," said Bellingham. He lifted up one of the dried palmate leaves from the table and frizzled it over the chimney of the lamp. It broke away into heavy smoke wreaths, and a pungent, biting odour filled the chamber. "It's the sacred plant—the plant of the priests," he remarked. "Do you know anything of Eastern languages, Smith?"



"Nothing at all. Not a word."

The answer seemed to lift a weight from the Egyptologist's mind.

"By the way," he continued, "how long was it from the time that you ran down, until I came to my senses?"

"Not long. Some four or five minutes."

"I thought it could not be very long," said he, drawing a long breath. "But what a strange thing unconsciousness is! There is no measurement to it. I could not tell from my own sensations if it were seconds or weeks. Now that gentleman on the table was packed up in the days of the eleventh dynasty, some forty centuries ago, and yet if he could find his tongue, he would tell us that this lapse of time has been but a closing of the eyes and a reopening of them. He is a singularly fine mummy, Smith."

Smith stepped over to the table and looked down with a professional eye at the black and twisted form in front of him. The features, though horribly discoloured, were perfect, and two little nut-like eyes still lurked in the depths of the black, hollow sockets. The blotched skin was drawn tightly from bone to bone, and a tangled wrap of black coarse hair fell over the ears. Two thin teeth, like those of a rat, overlay the shrivelled lower lip. In its crouching position, with bent joints and craned head, there was a suggestion of energy about the horrid thing which made Smith's gorge rise. The gaunt ribs, with their parchment-like covering, were exposed, and the sunken, leaden-hued abdomen, with the long slit where the embalmer had left his mark; but the lower limbs were wrapt round with coarse yellow bandages.

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A number of little clove-like pieces of myrrh and of cassia were sprinkled over the body, and lay scattered on the inside of the case.

"I don't know his name," said Bellingham, passing his hand over the shrivelled head. "You see the outer sarcophagus with the inscriptions is missing. Lot 249 is all the title he has now. You see it printed on his case. That was his number in the auction at which I picked him up."

"He has been a very pretty sort of fellow in his day," remarked Abercrombie Smith.

"He has been a giant. His mummy is six feet seven in length, and that would be a giant over there, for they were never a very robust race. Feel these great knotted bones, too. He would be a nasty fellow to tackle."

"Perhaps these very hands helped to build the stones into the pyramids," suggested Monkhouse Lee, looking down with disgust in his eyes at the crooked, unclean talons.

"No fear. This fellow has been pickled in natron, and looked after in the most approved style. They did not serve hodsomen in that fashion. Salt or bitumen was enough for them. It has been calculated that this sort of thing cost about seven hundred and thirty pounds in our money. Our friend was a noble at the least. What do you make of that small inscription near his feet, Smith?"

"I told you that I know no Eastern tongue."

"Ah, so you did. It is the name of the embalmer, I take it. A very conscientious worker he must have been. I wonder how many modern works will survive four thousand years?"

He kept on speaking lightly and rapidly, but it

was evident to Abercrombie Smith that he was still palpitating with fear. His hands shook, his lower lip trembled, and look where he would, his eye always came sliding round to his gruesome companion. Through all his fear, however, there was a suspicion of triumph in his tone and manner. His eyes shone, and his footstep, as he paced the room, was brisk and jaunty. He gave the impression of a man who has gone through an ordeal, the marks of which he still bears upon him, but which has helped him to his end.

"You're not going yet?" he cried, as Smith rose from the sofa.

At the prospect of solitude, his fears seemed to crowd back upon him, and he stretched out a hand to detain him.

"Yes, I must go. I have my work to do. You are all right now. I think that with your nervous system you should take up some less morbid study."

"Oh, I am not nervous as a rule; and I have unwrapped mummies before."

"You fainted last time," observed Monkhouse Lee.

"Ah, yes, so I did. Well, I must have a nerve tonic or a course of electricity. You are not going, Lee?"

"I'll do whatever you wish, Ned."

"Then I'll come down with you and have a shake-down on your sofa. Good-night, Smith. I am so sorry to have disturbed you with my foolishness."

They shook hands, and as the medical student stumbled up the spiral and irregular stair he heard a key turn in a door, and the steps of his two new acquaintances as they descended to the lower floor.

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In this strange way began the acquaintance between Edward Bellingham and Abercrombie Smith, an acquaintance which the latter, at least, had no desire to push further. Bellingham, however, appeared to have taken a fancy to his rough-spoken neighbour, and made his advances in such a way that he could hardly be repulsed without absolute brutality. Twice he called to thank Smith for his assistance, and many times afterward he looked in with books, papers and such other civilities as two bachelor neighbours can offer each other. He was, as Smith soon found, a man of wide reading, with catholic tastes and an extraordinary memory. His manner, too, was so pleasing and suave that one came, after a time, to overlook his repellent appearance. For a jaded and wearied man he was no unpleasant companion, and Smith found himself, after a time, looking forward to his visits, and even returning them.

Clever as he undoubtedly was, however, the medical student seemed to detect a dash of insanity in the man. He broke out at times into a high, inflated style of talk which was in contrast with the simplicity of his life.

"It is a wonderful thing," he cried, "to feel that one can command powers of good and of evil—a ministering angel or a demon of vengeance." And again, of Monkhouse Lee, he said,—“Lee is a good fellow, an honest fellow, but he is without strength or ambition. He would not make a fit partner for a man with a great enterprise. He would not make a fit partner for me.”

At such hints and innuendoes stolid Smith, puffing solemnly at his pipe, would simply raise his eyebrows and shake his head, with little interjec-

tions of medical wisdom as to earlier hours and fresher air.

One habit Bellingham had developed of late which Smith knew to be a frequent herald of a weakening mind. He appeared to be forever talking to himself. At late hours of the night, when there could be no visitor with him, Smith could still hear his voice beneath him in a low, muffled monologue, sunk almost to a whisper, and yet very audible in the silence. This solitary babbling annoyed and distracted the student, so that he spoke more than once to his neighbour about it. Bellingham, however, flushed up at the charge, and denied curtly that he had uttered a sound; indeed, he showed more annoyance over the matter than the occasion seemed to demand.

Had Abercrombie Smith had any doubt as to his own ears he had not to go far to find corroboration. Tom Styles, the little wrinkled man-servant who had attended to the wants of the lodgers in the turret for a longer time than any man's memory could carry him, was sorely put to it over the same matter.

"If you please, sir," said he, as he tidied down the top chamber one morning, "do you think Mr. Bellingham is all right, sir?"

"All right, Styles?"

"Yes, sir. Right in his head, sir."

"Why should he not be, then?"

"Well, I don't know, sir. His habits has changed of late. He's not the same man he used to be, though I make free to say that he was never quite one of my gentlemen, like Mr. Hastie or yourself, sir. He's took to talkin' to himself something awful. I wonder it don't disturb you. I don't know what to make of him, sir."

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"I don't know what business it is of yours, Styles."

"Well, I takes an interest, Mr. Smith. It may be forward of me, but I can't help it. I feel sometimes as if I was mother and father to my young gentlemen. It all falls on me when things go wrong and the relations come. But Mr. Bellingham, sir. I want to know what it is that walks about his room sometimes when he's out and when the door's locked on the outside."

"Eh ? you're talking nonsense, Styles."

"Maybe so, sir ; but I heard it more'n once with my own ears."

"Rubbish, Styles."

"Very good, sir. You'll ring the bell if you want me."

Abercrombie Smith gave little heed to the gossip of the old man-servant, but a small incident occurred a few days later which left an unpleasant effect upon his mind, and brought the words of Styles forcibly to his memory.

Bellingham had come up to see him late one night, and was entertaining him with an interesting account of the rock tombs of Beni Hassan in Upper Egypt, when Smith, whose hearing was remarkably acute, distinctly heard the sound of a door opening on the landing below.

"There's some fellow gone in or out of your room," he remarked.

Bellingham sprang up and stood helpless for a moment, with the expression of a man who is half incredulous and half afraid.

"I surely locked it. I am almost positive that I locked it," he stammered. "No one could have opened it."

"Why, I hear someone coming up the steps now," said Smith.

Bellingham rushed out through the door, slammed it loudly behind him, and hurried down the stairs. About half-way down Smith heard him stop, and thought he caught the sound of whispering. A moment later the door beneath him shut, a key creaked in a lock, and Bellingham, with beads of moisture upon his pale face, ascended the stairs once more, and re-entered the room.

"It's all right," he said, throwing himself down in a chair. "It was that fool of a dog. He had pushed the door open. I don't know how I came to forget to lock it."

"I didn't know you kept a dog," said Smith, looking very thoughtfully at the disturbed face of his companion.

"Yes, I haven't had him long. I must get rid of him. He's a great nuisance."

"He must be, if you find it so hard to shut him up. I should have thought that shutting the door would have been enough, without locking it."

"I want to prevent old Styles from letting him out. He's of some value, you know, and it would be awkward to lose him."

"I am a bit of a dog-fancier myself," said Smith, still gazing hard at his companion from the corner of his eyes. "Perhaps you'll let me have a look at it."

"Certainly. But I am afraid it cannot be to-night; I have an appointment. Is that clock right? Then I am a quarter of an hour late already. You'll excuse me, I am sure."

He picked up his cap and hurried from the room. In spite of his appointment, Smith heard him re-

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enter his own chamber and lock his door upon the inside.

This interview left a disagreeable impression upon the medical student's mind. Bellingham had lied to him, and lied so clumsily that it looked as if he had desperate reasons for concealing the truth. Smith knew that his neighbour had no dog. He knew, also, that the step which he had heard upon the stairs was not the step of an animal. But if it were not, then what could it be? There was old Styles's statement about the something which used to pace the room at times when the owner was absent. Could it be a woman? Smith rather inclined to the view. If so, it would mean disgrace and expulsion to Bellingham if it were discovered by the authorities, so that his anxiety and falsehoods might be accounted for. And yet it was inconceivable that an undergraduate could keep a woman in his rooms without being instantly detected. Be the explanation what it might, there was something ugly about it, and Smith determined, as he turned to his books, to discourage all further attempts at intimacy on the part of his soft-spoken and ill-favoured neighbour.

But his work was destined to interruption that night. He had hardly caught up the broken threads when a firm, heavy footfall came three steps at a time from below, and Hastie, in blazer and flannels, burst into the room.

"Still at it!" said he, plumping down into his wonted arm-chair. "What a chap you are to stew! I believe an earthquake might come and knock Oxford into a cocked hat, and you would sit perfectly placid with your books among the ruins.



However, I won't bore you long. Three whiffs of baccy, and I am off."

"What's the news, then?" asked Smith, cramming a plug of bird's-eye into his briar with his forefinger.

"Nothing very much. Wilson made 70 for the freshmen against the eleven. They say that they will play him instead of Buddicomb, for Buddicomb is clean off colour. He used to be able to bowl a little, but it's nothing but half-volleys and long hops now."

"Medium right," suggested Smith, with the intense gravity which comes upon a 'varsity man when he speaks of athletics.

"Inclining to fast, with a work from leg. Comes with the arm about three inches or so. He used to be nasty on a wet wicket. Oh, by-the-way, have you heard about Long Norton?"

"What's that?"

"He's been attacked."

"Attacked?"

"Yes, just as he was turning out of the High Street, and within a hundred yards of the gate of Old's."

"But who——"

"Ah, that's the rub! If you said 'what,' you would be more grammatical. Norton swears that it was not human, and, indeed, from the scratches on his throat, I should be inclined to agree with him."

"What, then? Have we come down to spooks?"

Abercrombie Smith puffed his scientific contempt.

"Well, no; I don't think that is quite the idea, either. I am inclined to think that if any showman has lost a great ape lately, and the brute is in

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these parts, a jury would find a true bill against it. Norton passes that way every night, you know, about the same hour. There's a tree that hangs low over the path—the big elm from Rainy's garden. Norton thinks the thing dropped on him out of the tree. Anyhow, he was nearly strangled by two arms, which, he says, were as strong and as thin as steel bands. He saw nothing; only those beastly arms that tightened and tightened on him. He yelled his head nearly off, and a couple of chaps came running, and the thing went over the wall like a cat. He never got a fair sight of it the whole time. It gave Norton a shake up, I can tell you. I tell him it has been as good as a change at the sea-side for him."

"A garotter, most likely," said Smith.

"Very possibly. Norton says not; but we don't mind what he says. The garotter had long nails, and was pretty smart at swinging himself over walls. By-the-way, your beautiful neighbour would be pleased if he heard about it. He had a grudge against Norton, and he's not a man, from what I know of him, to forget his little debts. But hallo, old chap, what have you got in your noddle?"

"Nothing," Smith answered curtly.

He had started in his chair, and the look had flashed over his face which comes upon a man who is struck suddenly by some unpleasant idea.

"You looked as if something I had said had taken you on the raw. By-the-way, you have made the acquaintance of Master B. since I looked in last, have you not? Young Monkhouse Lee told me something to that effect."

"Yes; I know him slightly. He has been up here once or twice."

"Well, you're big enough and ugly enough to take care of yourself. He's not what I should call exactly a healthy sort of Johnny, though, no doubt, he's very clever, and all that. But you'll soon find out for yourself. Lee is all right; he's a very decent little fellow. Well, so long, old chap! I row Mullins for the Vice-Chancellor's pot on Wednesday week, so mind you come down, in case I don't see you before."

Bovine Smith laid down his pipe and turned stolidly to his books once more. But with all the will in the world, he found it very hard to keep his mind upon his work. It would slip away to brood upon the man beneath him, and upon the little mystery which hung round his chambers. Then his thoughts turned to this singular attack of which Hastie had spoken, and to the grudge which Bellingham was said to owe the object of it. The two ideas would persist in rising together in his mind, as though there were some close and intimate connection between them. And yet the suspicion was so dim and vague that it could not be put down in words.

"Confound the chap!" cried Smith, as he shied his book on pathology across the room. "He has spoiled my night's reading, and that's reason enough, if there were no other, why I should steer clear of him in the future."

For ten days the medical student confined himself so closely to his studies that he neither saw nor heard anything of either of the men beneath him. At the hours when Bellingham had been accustomed to visit him, he took care to sport his oak, and though he more than once heard a knocking at his outer door, he resolutely refused to an-

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swer it. One afternoon, however, he was descending the stairs when, just as he was passing it, Bellingham's door flew open, and young Monkhouse Lee came out with his eyes sparkling and a dark flush of anger upon his olive cheeks. Close at his heels followed Bellingham, his fat, unhealthy face all quivering with malignant passion.

"You fool!" he hissed. "You'll be sorry."

"Very likely," cried the other. "Mind what I say. It's off! I won't hear of it!"

"You've promised, anyhow."

"Oh, I'll keep that! I won't speak. But I'd rather little Eva was in her grave. Once for all, it's off. She'll do what I say. We don't want to see you again."

So much Smith could not avoid hearing, but he hurried on, for he had no wish to be involved in their dispute. There had been a serious breach between them, that was clear enough, and Lee was going to cause the engagement with his sister to be broken off. Smith thought of Hastie's comparison of the toad and the dove, and was glad to think that the matter was at an end. Bellingham's face when he was in a passion was not pleasant to look upon. He was not a man to whom an innocent girl could be trusted for life. As he walked, Smith wondered languidly what could have caused the quarrel, and what the promise might be which Bellingham had been so anxious that Monkhouse Lee should keep.

It was the day of the sculling match between Hastie and Mullins, and a stream of men were making their way down to the banks of the river. A May sun was shining brightly, and the yellow path was barred with the black shadows of the tall

elm-trees. On either side the grey colleges lay back from the road, the hoary old mothers of minds looking out from their high, mullioned windows at the tide of young life which swept so merrily past them. Black-clad tutors, prim officials, pale reading men, brown-faced, straw-hatted young athletes in white sweaters or many-coloured blazers, all were hurrying toward the blue winding river which curves through the meadows.

Abercrombie Smith, with the intuition of an old oarsman, chose his position at the point where he knew that the struggle, if there were a struggle, would come. Far off he heard the hum which announced the start, the gathering roar of the approach, the thunder of running feet, and the shouts of the men in the boats beneath him. A spray of half-clad, deep-breathing runners shot past him, and craning over their shoulders, he saw Hastie pulling a steady thirty-six, while his opponent, with a jerky forty, was a good boat's length behind him. Smith gave a cheer for his friend, and pulling out his watch, was starting off again for his chambers, when he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and found that young Monkhouse Lee was beside him.

"I saw you there," he said, in a timid, deprecating way. "I wanted to speak to you, if you could spare me a half-hour. This cottage is mine. I share it with Harrington of Merrion's. Come in and have a cup of tea."

"I must be back presently," said Smith. "I am hard on the grind at present. But I'll come in for a few minutes with pleasure. I wouldn't have come out only Hastie is a friend of mine."

"So he is of mine. Hasn't he a beautiful style?

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Mullins wasn't in it. But come into the cottage. It's a little den of a place, but it is pleasant to work in during the summer months."

It was a small, square, white building, with green doors and shutters, and a rustic trellis-work porch, standing back some fifty yards from the river's bank. Inside, the main room was roughly fitted up as a study—deal table, unpainted shelves with books, and a few cheap oleographs upon the wall. A kettle sang upon a spirit-stove, and there were tea things upon a tray on the table.

"Try that chair and have a cigarette," said Lee. "Let me pour you out a cup of tea. It's so good of you to come in, for I know that your time is a good deal taken up. I wanted to say to you that, if I were you, I should change my rooms at once."

"Eh?"

Smith sat staring with a lighted match in one hand and his unlit cigarette in the other.

"Yes; it must seem very extraordinary, and the worst of it is that I cannot give my reasons, for I am under a solemn promise—a very solemn promise. But I may go so far as to say that I don't think Bellingham is a very safe man to live near. I intend to camp out here as much as I can for a time."

"Not safe! What do you mean?"

"Ah, that's what I mustn't say. But do take my advice, and move your rooms. We had a grand row to-day. You must have heard us, for you came down the stairs."

"I saw that you had fallen out."

"He's a horrible chap, Smith. That is the only word for him. I have had doubts about him ever since that night when he fainted—you remember,

when you came down. I taxed him to-day, and he told me things that made my hair rise, and wanted me to stand in with him. I'm not strait-laced, but I am a clergyman's son, you know, and I think there are some things which are quite beyond the pale. I only thank God that I found him out before it was too late, for he was to have married into my family."

"This is all very fine, Lee," said Abercrombie Smith curtly. "But either you are saying a great deal too much or a great deal too little."

"I give you a warning."

"If there is real reason for warning, no promise can bind you. If I see a rascal about to blow a place up with dynamite no pledge will stand in my way of preventing him."

"Ah, but I cannot prevent him, and I can do nothing but warn you."

"Without saying what you warn me against."

"Against Bellingham."

"But that is childish. Why should I fear him, or any man?"

"I can't tell you. I can only entreat you to change your rooms. You are in danger where you are. I don't even say that Bellingham would wish to injure you. But it might happen, for he is a dangerous neighbour just now."

"Perhaps I know more than you think," said Smith, looking keenly at the young man's boyish, earnest face. "Suppose I tell you that some one else shares Bellingham's rooms."

Monkhouse Lee sprang from his chair in uncontrollable excitement.

"You know, then?" he gasped.

"A woman."

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Lee dropped back again with a groan.

"My lips are sealed," he said. "I must not speak."

"Well, anyhow," said Smith, rising, "it is not likely that I should allow myself to be frightened out of rooms which suit me very nicely. It would be a little too feeble for me to move out all my goods and chattels because you say that Bellingham might in some unexplained way do me an injury. I think that I'll just take my chance, and stay where I am, and as I see that it's nearly five o'clock, I must ask you to excuse me."

He bade the young student adieu in a few curt words, and made his way homeward through the sweet spring evening, feeling half-ruffled, half-amused, as any other strong, unimaginative man might who has been menaced by a vague and shadowy danger.

There was one little indulgence which Abercrombie Smith always allowed himself, however closely his work might press upon him. Twice a week, on the Tuesday and the Friday, it was his invariable custom to walk over to Parlingford, the residence of Dr. Plumtree Peterson, situated about a mile and a half from the town. Peterson had been a close friend of Smith's elder brother Francis, and as he was a bachelor, fairly well-to-do, with a good cellar and a better library, his house was a pleasant goal for a man who was in need of a brisk walk. Twice a week, then, the medical student would swing out there along the dark country roads, and spend a pleasant hour in Peterson's comfortable study, discussing, over a glass of old port, the gossip of the 'varsity or the latest developments of medicine or of surgery.

On the day which followed his interview with



Monkhouse Lee, Smith shut up his books at a quarter past eight, the hour when he usually started for his friend's house. As he was leaving his room, however, his eyes chanced to fall upon one of the books which Bellingham had lent him, and his conscience pricked him for not having returned it. However repellent the man might be, he should not be treated with discourtesy. Taking the book, he walked downstairs and knocked at his neighbour's door. There was no answer; but on turning the handle he found that it was unlocked. Pleased at the thought of avoiding an interview, he stepped inside, and placed the book with his card upon the table.

The lamp was turned half down, but Smith could see the details of the room plainly enough. It was all much as he had seen it before—the frieze, the animal-headed gods, the hanging crocodile, and the table littered over with papers and dried leaves. The mummy case stood upright against the wall, but the mummy itself was missing. There was no sign of any second occupant of the room, and he felt as he withdrew that he had probably done Bellingham an injustice. Had he a guilty secret to preserve, he would hardly leave his door open so that all the world might enter.

The spiral stair was as black as pitch, and Smith was slowly making his way down its irregular steps, when he was suddenly conscious that something had passed him in the darkness. There was a faint sound, a whiff of air, a light brushing past his elbow, but so slight that he could scarcely be certain of it. He stopped and listened, but the wind was rustling among the ivy outside, and he could hear nothing else.

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"Is that you, Styles?" he shouted.

There was no answer, and all was still behind him. It must have been a sudden gust of air, for there were crannies and cracks in the old turret. And yet he could almost have sworn that he heard a footfall by his very side. He had emerged into the quadrangle, still turning the matter over in his head, when a man came running swiftly across the smooth-cropped lawn.

"Is that you, Smith?"

"Hullo, Hastie!"

"For God's sake come at once! Young Lee is drowned! Here's Harrington of Merrion's with the news. The doctor is out. You'll do, but come along at once. There may be life in him."

"Have you brandy?"

"No."

"I'll bring some. There's a flask on my table."

Smith bounded up the stairs, taking three at a time, seized the flask, and was rushing down with it, when, as he passed Bellingham's room, his eyes fell upon something which left him gasping and staring upon the landing.

The door, which he had closed behind him, was now open, and right in front of him, with the lamp-light shining upon it, was the mummy case. Three minutes ago it had been empty. He could swear to that. Now it framed the lank body of its horrible occupant, who stood, grim and stark, with his black shrivelled face toward the door. The form was lifeless and inert, but it seemed to Smith as he gazed that there still lingered a lurid spark of vitality, some faint sign of consciousness in the little eyes which lurked in the depths of the hollow sockets. So astounded and shaken was he that he

had forgotten his errand, and was still staring at the lean, sunken figure when the voice of his friend below recalled him to himself.

"Come on, Smith!" he shouted. "It's life and death, you know. Hurry up! Now, then," he added, as the medical student reappeared, "let us do a sprint. It is well under a mile, and we should do it in five minutes. A human life is better worth running for than a pot."

Neck and neck they dashed through the darkness, and did not pull up until panting and spent, they had reached the little cottage by the river. Young Lee, limp and dripping like a broken water-plant, was stretched upon the sofa, the green scum of the river upon his black hair, and a fringe of white foam upon his leaden-hued lips. Beside him knelt his fellow-student Harrington, endeavouring to chafe some warmth back into his rigid limbs.

"I think there's life in him," said Smith, with his hand to the lad's side. "Put your watch glass to his lips. Yes, there's dimming on it. You take one arm, Hastie. Now work it as I do, and we'll soon pull him round."

For ten minutes they worked in silence, inflating and depressing the chest of the unconscious man. At the end of that time a shiver ran through his body, his lips trembled, and he opened his eyes. The three students burst out into an irrepressible cheer.

"Wake up, old chap. You've frightened us quite enough."

"Have some brandy. Take a sip from the flask."

"He's all right now," said his companion Harrington. "Heavens, what a fright I got! I was

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reading here, and he had gone out for a stroll as far as the river, when I heard a scream and a splash. Out I ran, and by the time I could find him and fish him out, all life seemed to have gone. Then Simpson couldn't get a doctor, for he has a game-leg, and I had to run, and I don't know what I'd have done without you fellows. That's right, old chap. Sit up."

Monkhouse Lee had raised himself on his hands, and looked wildly about him.

"What's up?" he asked. "I've been in the water. Ah, yes; I remember."

A look of fear came into his eyes, and he sank his face into his hands.

"How did you fall in?"

"I didn't fall in."

"How, then?"

"I was thrown in. I was standing by the bank, and something from behind picked me up like a feather and hurled me in. I heard nothing, and I saw nothing. But I know what it was, for all that."

"And so do I," whispered Smith.

Lee looked up with a quick glance of surprise.

"You've learned, then?" he said. "You remember the advice I gave you?"

"Yes, and I begin to think that I shall take it."

"I don't know what the deuce you fellows are talking about," said Hastie, "but I think, if I were you, Harrington, I should get Lee to bed at once. It will be time enough to discuss the why and the wherefore when he is a little stronger. I think, Smith, you and I can leave him alone now. I am walking back to college; if you are coming in that direction, we can have a chat."

But it was little chat that they had upon their homeward path. Smith's mind was too full of the incidents of the evening, the absence of the mummy from his neighbour's rooms, the step that passed him on the stair, the reappearance—the extraordinary, inexplicable reappearance of the grisly thing—and then this attack upon Lee, corresponding so closely to the previous outrage upon another man against whom Bellingham bore a grudge. All this settled in his thoughts, together with the many little incidents which had previously turned him against his neighbour, and the singular circumstances under which he was first called in to him. What had been a dim suspicion, a vague, fantastic conjecture, had suddenly taken form, and stood out in his mind as a grim fact, a thing not to be denied. And yet, how monstrous it was! how unheard of! how entirely beyond all bounds of human experience. An impartial judge, or even the friend who walked by his side, would simply tell him that his eyes had deceived him, that the mummy had been there all the time, that young Lee had tumbled into the river as any other man tumbles into a river, and that a blue pill was the best thing for a disordered liver. He felt that he would have said as much if the positions had been reversed. And yet he could swear that Bellingham was a murderer at heart, and that he wielded a weapon such as no man had ever used in all the grim history of crime.

Hastie had branched off to his rooms with a few crisp and emphatic comments upon his friend's unsociability, and Abercrombie Smith crossed the quadrangle to his corner turret with a strong feeling of repulsion for his chambers and their associations. He would take Lee's advice, and move his

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quarters as soon as possible, for how could a man study when his ear was ever straining for every murmur or footstep in the room below? He observed, as he crossed over the lawn, that the light was still shining in Bellingham's window, and as he passed up the staircase the door opened, and the man himself looked out at him. With his fat, evil face he was like some bloated spider fresh from the weaving of his poisonous web.

"Good-evening," said he. "Won't you come in?"

"No," cried Smith, fiercely.

"No? You are busy as ever? I wanted to ask you about Lee. I was sorry to hear that there was a rumour that something was amiss with him."

His features were grave, but there was the gleam of a hidden laugh in his eyes as he spoke. Smith saw it, and he could have knocked him down for it.

"You'll be sorrier still to hear that Monkhouse Lee is doing very well, and is out of all danger," he answered. "Your hellish tricks have not come off this time. Oh, you needn't try to brazen it out. I know all about it."

Bellingham took a step back from the angry student, and half-closed the door as if to protect himself.

"You are mad," he said. "What do you mean? Do you assert that I had anything to do with Lee's accident?"

"Yes," thundered Smith. "You and that bag of bones behind you; you worked it between you. I tell you what it is, Master B., they have given up burning folk like you, but we still keep a hangman, and, by George! if any man in this college meets his death while you are here, I'll have you up, and

if you don't swing for it, it won't be my fault. You'll find that your filthy Egyptian tricks won't answer in England."

"You're a raving lunatic," said Bellingham.

"All right. You just remember what I say, for you'll find that I'll be better than my word."

The door slammed, and Smith went fuming up to his chamber, where he locked the door upon the inside, and spent half the night in smoking his old briar and brooding over the strange events of the evening.

Next morning Abercrombie Smith heard nothing of his neighbour, but Harrington called upon him in the afternoon to say that Lee was almost himself again. All day Smith stuck fast to his work, but in the evening he determined to pay the visit to his friend Dr. Peterson upon which he had started the night before. A good walk and a friendly chat would be welcome to his jangled nerves.

Bellingham's door was shut as he passed, but glancing back when he was some distance from the turret, he saw his neighbour's head at the window outlined against the lamp-light, his face pressed apparently against the glass as he gazed out into the darkness. It was a blessing to be away from all contact with him, if but for a few hours, and Smith stepped out briskly, and breathed the soft spring air into his lungs. The half-moon lay in the west between two Gothic pinnacles, and threw upon the silvered street a dark tracery from the stone-work above. There was a brisk breeze, and light, fleecy clouds drifted swiftly across the sky. Old's was on the very border of the town, and in five minutes Smith found himself beyond the

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houses and between the hedges of a May-scented lane.

It was a lonely and little frequented road which led to his friend's house. Early as it was, Smith did not meet a single soul upon his way. He walked briskly along until he came to the avenue gate, which opened into the long gravel drive leading up to Parlingford. In front of him he could see the cosy red light of the windows glimmering through the foliage. He stood with his hand upon the iron latch of the swinging gate, and he glanced back at the road along which he had come. Something was coming swiftly down it.

It moved in the shadow of the hedge, silently and furtively, a dark, crouching figure, dimly visible against the black background. Even as he gazed back at it, it had lessened its distance by twenty paces, and was fast closing upon him. Out of the darkness he had a glimpse of a scraggy neck, and of two eyes that will ever haunt him in his dreams. He turned, and with a cry of terror he ran for his life up the avenue. There were the red lights, the signals of safety, almost within a stone's throw of him. He was a famous runner, but never had he run as he ran that night.

The heavy gate had swung into place behind him, but he heard it dash open again before his pursuer. As he rushed madly and wildly through the night, he could hear a swift, dry patter behind him, and could see, as he threw back a glance, that this horror was bounding like a tiger at his heels, with blazing eyes and one stringy arm out-thrown. Thank God, the door was ajar. He could see the thin bar of light which shot from the lamp in the hall. Nearer yet sounded the clatter from behind.



He heard a hoarse gurgling at his very shoulder. With a shriek he flung himself against the door, slammed and bolted it behind him, and sank half-fainting on to the hall chair.

"My goodness, Smith, what's the matter?" asked Peterson, appearing at the door of his study.

"Give me some brandy!"

Peterson disappeared, and came rushing out again with a glass and a decanter.

"You need it," he said, as his visitor drank off what he poured out for him. "Why, man, you are as white as a cheese."

Smith laid down his glass, rose up, and took a deep breath.

"I am my own man again now," said he. "I was never so unmanned before. But, with your leave, Peterson, I will sleep here to-night, for I don't think I could face that road again except by daylight. It's weak, I know, but I can't help it."

Peterson looked at his visitor with a very questioning eye.

"Of course you shall sleep here if you wish. I'll tell Mrs. Burney to make up the spare bed. Where are you off to now?"

"Come up with me to the window that overlooks the door. I want you to see what I have seen."

They went up to the window of the upper hall whence they could look down upon the approach to the house. The drive and the fields on either side lay quiet and still, bathed in the peaceful moonlight.

"Well, really, Smith," remarked Peterson, "it is well that I know you to be an abstemious man. What in the world can have frightened you?"

"I'll tell you presently. But where can it have

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gone? Ah, now look, look! See the curve of the road just beyond your gate."

"Yes, I see; you needn't pinch my arm off. I saw someone pass. I should say a man, rather thin, apparently, and tall, very tall. But what of him? And what of yourself? You are still shaking like an aspen leaf."

"I have been within hand-grip of the devil, that's all. But come down to your study, and I shall tell you the whole story."

He did so. Under the cheery lamplight, with a glass of wine on the table beside him, and the portly form and florid face of his friend in front, he narrated, in their order, all the events, great and small, which had formed so singular a chain, from the night on which he had found Bellingham fainting in front of the mummy case until his horrid experience of an hour ago.

"There now," he said as he concluded, "that's the whole black business. It is monstrous and incredible, but it is true."

Dr. Plumtree Peterson sat for some time in silence with a very puzzled expression upon his face.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life, never!" he said at last. "You have told me the facts. Now tell me your inferences."

"You can draw your own."

"But I should like to hear yours. You have thought over the matter, and I have not."

"Well, it must be a little vague in detail, but the main points seem to me to be clear enough. This fellow Bellingham, in his Eastern studies, has got hold of some infernal secret by which a mummy—or possibly only this particular mummy—can be temporarily brought to life. He was trying this

disgusting business on the night when he fainted. No doubt the sight of the creature moving had shaken his nerve, even though he had expected it. You remember that almost the first words he said were to call out upon himself as a fool. Well, he got more hardened afterward, and carried the matter through without fainting. The vitality which he could put into it was evidently only a passing thing, for I have seen it continually in its case as dead as this table. He has some elaborate process, I fancy, by which he brings the thing to pass. Having done it, he naturally bethought him that he might use the creature as an agent. It has intelligence and it has strength. For some purpose he took Lee into his confidence; but Lee, like a decent Christian, would have nothing to do with such a business. Then they had a row, and Lee vowed that he would tell his sister of Bellingham's true character. Bellingham's game was to prevent him, and he nearly managed it, by setting this creature of his on his track. He had already tried its powers upon another man—Norton—toward whom he had a grudge. It is the merest chance that he has not two murders upon his soul. Then, when I taxed him with the matter, he had the strongest reasons for wishing to get me out of the way before I could convey my knowledge to anyone else. He got his chance when I went out, for he knew my habits, and where I was bound for. I have had a narrow shave, Peterson, and it is mere luck you didn't find me on your doorstep in the morning. I'm not a nervous man as a rule, and I never thought to have the fear of death put upon me as it was to-night."

"My dear boy, you take the matter too seri-

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ously," said his companion. "Your nerves are out of order with your work, and you make too much of it. How could such a thing as this stride about the streets of the town, even at night, without being seen?"

"It has been seen. There is quite a scare in the town about an escaped ape, as they imagine the creature to be. It is the talk of the place."

"Well, it's a striking chain of events. And yet, my dear fellow, you must allow that each incident in itself is capable of a more natural explanation."

"What! even my adventure of to-night?"

"Certainly. You come out with your nerves all unstrung, and your head full of this theory of yours. Some gaunt, half-famished tramp steals after you, and seeing you run, is emboldened to pursue you. Your fears and imagination do the rest."

"It won't do, Peterson; it won't do."

"And again, in the instance of your finding the mummy case empty, and then a few moments later with an occupant, you know that it was lamp-light, that the lamp was half turned down, and that you had no special reason to look hard at the case. It is quite possible that you may have overlooked the creature in the first instance."

"No, no; it is out of the question."

"And then Lee may have fallen into the river, and Norton been garotted. It is certainly a formidable indictment that you have against Bellingham; but if you were to place it before a police magistrate, he would simply laugh in your face."

"I know he would. That is why I mean to take the matter into my own hands."

"Eh?"

"Yes; I feel that a public duty rests upon me,

and, besides, I must do it for my own safety, unless I choose to allow myself to be hunted by this beast out of the college, and that would be a little too feeble. I have quite made up my mind what I shall do. And first of all, may I use your paper and pens for an hour?"

"Most certainly. You will find all that you want upon that side table."

Abercrombie Smith sat down before a sheet of foolscap, and for an hour, and then for a second hour his pen travelled swiftly over it. Page after page was finished and tossed aside while his friend leaned back in his arm-chair, looking across at him with patient curiosity. At last, with an exclamation of satisfaction, Smith sprang to his feet, gathered his papers up into order, and laid the last one upon Peterson's desk.

"Kindly sign this as a witness," he said.

"A witness? Of what?"

"Of my signature, and of the date. The date is the most important. Why, Peterson, my life might hang upon it."

"My dear Smith, you are talking wildly. Let me beg you to go to bed."

"On the contrary, I never spoke so deliberately in my life. And I will promise to go to bed the moment you have signed it."

"But what is it?"

"It is a statement of all that I have been telling you to-night. I wish you to witness it."

"Certainly," said Peterson, signing his name under that of his companion. "There you are! But what is the idea?"

"You will kindly retain it, and produce it in case I am arrested."

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"Arrested? For what?"

"For murder. It is quite on the cards. I wish to be ready for every event. There is only one course open to me, and I am determined to take it."

"For Heaven's sake, don't do anything rash!"

"Believe me, it would be far more rash to adopt any other course. I hope that we won't need to bother you, but it will ease my mind to know that you have this statement of my motives. And now I am ready to take your advice and to go to roost, for I want to be at my best in the morning."

Abercrombie Smith was not an entirely pleasant man to have as an enemy. Slow and easy-tempered, he was formidable when driven to action. He brought to every purpose in life the same deliberate resoluteness which had distinguished him as a scientific student. He had laid his studies aside for a day, but he intended that the day should not be wasted. Not a word did he say to his host as to his plans, but by nine o'clock he was well on his way to his rooms.

In the High Street he stopped at Clifford's, the gun-maker's, and bought a heavy revolver, with a box of central-fire cartridges. Six of them he slipped into the chambers, and half-cocking the weapon, placed it in the pocket of his coat. He then made his way to Hastie's rooms, where the big oarsman was lounging over his breakfast, with the *Sporting Times* propped up against the coffee-pot.

"Hullo! What's up?" he asked. "Have some coffee?"

"No, thank you. I want you to come with me, Hastie, and do what I ask you."

"Certainly, my boy."

"And bring a heavy stick with you."

"Hullo!" Hastie stared. "Here's a hunting-crop that would fell an ox."

"One other thing. You have a box of amputating knives. Give me the longest of them."

"There you are. You seem to be fairly on the war trail. Anything else?"

"No; that will do." Smith placed the knife inside his coat, and led the way to the quadrangle.

"We are neither of us chickens, Hastie," said he.

"I think I can do this job alone, but I take you as a precaution. I am going to have a little talk with Bellingham. If I have only him to deal with, I won't, of course, need you. If I shout, however, up you come, and lam out with your whip as hard as you can lick. Do you understand?"

"All right. I'll come if I hear you bellow."

"Stay here, then. I may be a little time, but don't budge until I come down."

"I'm a fixture."

Smith ascended the stairs, opened Bellingham's door and stepped in. Bellingham was seated behind his table, writing. Beside him, among his litter of strange possessions, towered the mummy case, with its sale number 249 still stuck upon its front, and its hideous occupant stiff and stark within it. Smith looked very deliberately round him, closed the door, locked it, took the key from the inside, and then stepping across to the fireplace, struck a match and set the fire alight. Bellingham sat staring, with amazement and rage upon his bloated face.

"Well, really now, you make yourself at home," he gasped.

Smith sat himself deliberately down, placing his

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watch upon the table, drew out his pistol, cocked it, and laid it in his lap. Then he took the long amputating knife from his bosom, and threw it down in front of Bellingham.

"Now, then," said he, "just get to work and cut up that mummy."

"Oh, is that it?" said Bellingham with a sneer.

"Yes, that is it. They tell me that the law can't touch you. But I have a law that will set matters straight. If in five minutes you have not set to work, I swear by the God who made me that I will put a bullet through your brain!"

"You would murder me?"

Bellingham had half risen, and his face was the colour of putty.

"Yes."

"And for what?"

"To stop your mischief. One minute has gone."

"But what have I done?"

"I know and you know."

"This is mere bullying."

"Two minutes are gone."

"But you must give reasons. You are a madman—a dangerous madman. Why should I destroy my own property? It is a valuable mummy."

"You must cut it up, and you must burn it."

"I will do no such thing."

"Four minutes are gone."

Smith took up the pistol and he looked toward Bellingham with an inexorable face. As the second hand stole round, he raised his hand, and the finger twitched upon the trigger.

"There! there! I'll do it!" screamed Bellingham.

In frantic haste he caught up the knife and



hacked at the figure of the mummy, ever glancing round to see the eye and the weapon of his terrible visitor bent upon him. The creature crackled and snapped under every stab of the keen blade. A thick yellow dust rose up from it. Spices and dried essences rained down upon the floor. Suddenly, with a rending crack, its backbone snapped asunder, and it fell, a brown heap of sprawling limbs, upon the floor.

"Now into the fire!" said Smith.

The flames leaped and roared as the dried and tinderlike *débris* was piled upon it. The little room was like the stoke-hole of a steamer and the sweat ran down the faces of the two men; but still the one stooped and worked, while the other sat watching him with a set face. A thick, fat smoke oozed out from the fire, and a heavy smell of burned rosin and singed hair filled the air. In a quarter of an hour a few charred and brittle sticks were all that was left of Lot No. 249.

"Perhaps that will satisfy you," snarled Bellingham, with hate and fear in his little grey eyes as he glanced back at his tormentor.

"No; I must make a clean sweep of all your materials. We must have no more devil's tricks. In with all these leaves! They may have something to do with it."

"And what now?" asked Bellingham, when the leaves also had been added to the blaze.

"Now the roll of papyrus which you had on the table that night. It is in that drawer, I think."

"No, no," shouted Bellingham. "Don't burn that! Why, man, you don't know what you do. It is unique; it contains wisdom which is nowhere else to be found."

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"Out with it!"

"But look here, Smith, you can't really mean it. I'll share the knowledge with you. I'll teach you all that is in it. Or, stay, let me only copy it before you burn it!"

Smith stepped forward and turned the key in the drawer. Taking out the yellow, curled roll of paper, he threw it into the fire, and pressed it down with his heel. Bellingham screamed, and grabbed at it; but Smith pushed him back, and stood over it until it was reduced to a formless grey ash.

"Now, Master B.," said he, "I think I have pretty well drawn your teeth. You'll hear from me again, if you return to your old tricks. And now good-morning, for I must go back to my studies."

And such is the narrative of Abercrombie Smith as to the singular events which occurred in Old College, in the spring of '84. As Bellingham left the university immediately afterward, and was last heard of in the Soudan, there is no one who can contradict his statement. But the wisdom of men is small, and the ways of nature are strange, and who shall put a bound to the dark things which may be found by those who seek for them?

## THE LOS AMIGOS FIASCO

I USED to be the leading practitioner of Los Amigos. Of course, everyone has heard of the great electrical generating gear there. The town is wide-spread, and there are dozens of little townlets and villages all round, which receive their supply from the same centre, so that the works are on a very large scale. The Los Amigos folk say that they are the largest upon earth, but then we claim that for everything in Los Amigos except the gaol and the death-rate. Those are said to be the smallest.

Now, with so fine an electrical supply, it seemed to be a sinful waste of hemp that the Los Amigos criminals should perish in the old-fashioned manner. And then came the news of the electrocutions in the East, and how the results had not after all been so instantaneous as had been hoped. The Western Engineers raised their eyebrows when they read of the puny shocks by which these men had perished, and they vowed in Los Amigos that when an irreclaimable came their way he should be dealt handsomely by, and have the run of all the big dynamos. There should be no reserve, said the engineers, but he should have all that they had got. And what the result of that would be none could predict, save that it must be absolutely blasting and deadly. Never before had a man been so charged with electricity as they would charge him. He was to be smitten by the essence of ten thunderbolts. Some prophesied combustion, and

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some disintegration and disappearance. They were waiting eagerly to settle the question by actual demonstration, and it was just at that moment that Duncan Warner came that way.

Warner had been wanted by the law, and by nobody else, for many years. Desperado, murderer, train robber and road agent, he was a man beyond the pale of human pity. He had deserved a dozen deaths, and the Los Amigos folk grudged him so gaudy a one as that. He seemed to feel himself to be unworthy of it, for he made two frenzied attempts at escape. He was a powerful, muscular man, with a lion head, tangled black locks, and a sweeping beard which covered his broad chest. When he was tried, there was no finer head in all the crowded court. It's no new thing to find the best face looking from the dock. But his good looks could not balance his bad deeds. His advocate did all he knew, but the cards lay against him, and Duncan Warner was handed over to the mercy of the big Los Amigos dynamos.

I was there at the committee meeting when the matter was discussed. The town council had chosen four experts to look after the arrangements. Three of them were admirable. There was Joseph M'Connor, the very man who had designed the dynamos, and there was Joshua Westmacott, the chairman of the Los Amigos Electrical Supply Company, Limited. Then there was myself as the chief medical man, and lastly an old German of the name of Peter Stulpnagel. The Germans were a strong body at Los Amigos, and they all voted for their man. That was how he got on the committee. It was said that he had been a wonderful electrician at home, and he was eternally working

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with wires and insulators and Leyden jars ; but, as he never seemed to get any further, or to have any results worth publishing, he came at last to be regarded as a harmless crank, who had made science his hobby. We three practical men smiled when we heard that he had been elected as our colleague, and at the meeting we fixed it all up very nicely among ourselves without much thought of the old fellow who sat with his ears scooped forward in his hands, for he was a trifle hard of hearing, taking no more part in the proceedings than the gentlemen of the press who scribbled their notes on the back benches.

We did not take long to settle it all. In New York a strength of some two thousand volts had been used, and death had not been instantaneous. Evidently their shock had been too weak. Los Amigos should not fall into that error. The charge should be six times greater, and therefore, of course, it would be six times more effective. Nothing could possibly be more logical. The whole concentrated force of the great dynamos should be employed on Duncan Warner.

So we three settled it, and had already risen to break up the meeting, when our silent companion opened his mouth for the first time.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you appear to me to show an extraordinary ignorance upon the subject of electricity. You have not mastered the first principles of its actions upon a human being."

The committee was about to break into an angry reply to this brusque comment, but the chairman of the Electrical Company tapped his forehead to claim its indulgence for the crankiness of the speaker.

"Pray tell us, sir," said he, with an ironical

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smile, "what is there in our conclusions with which you find fault?"

"With your assumption that a large dose of electricity will merely increase the effect of a small dose. Do you not think it possible that it might have an entirely different result? Do you know anything, by actual experiment, of the effect of such powerful shocks?"

"We know it by analogy," said the chairman, pompously. "All drugs increase their effect when they increase their dose; for example—for example——"

"Whisky," said Joseph M'Connor.

"Quite so. Whisky. You see it there."

Peter Stulpnagel smiled and shook his head.

"Your argument is not very good," said he. "When I used to take whisky, I used to find that one glass would excite me, but that six would send me to sleep, which is just the opposite. Now, suppose that electricity were to act in just the opposite way also, what then?"

We three practical men burst out laughing. We had known that our colleague was queer, but we never had thought that he would be as queer as this.

"What, then?" repeated Peter Stulpnagel.

"We'll take our chances," said the chairman.

"Pray consider," said Peter, "that workmen who have touched the wires, and who have received shocks of only a few hundred volts, have died instantly. The fact is well known. And yet when a much greater force was used upon a criminal at New York, the man struggled for some little time. Do you not clearly see that the smaller dose is the more deadly?"

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"I think, gentlemen, that this discussion has been carried on quite long enough," said the chairman, rising again. "The point, I take it, has already been decided by the majority of the committee, and Duncan Warner shall be electrocuted on Tuesday by the full strength of the Los Amigos dynamos. Is it not so?"

"I agree," said Joseph M'Connor.

"I agree," said I.

"And I protest," said Peter Stulpnagel.

"Then the motion is carried, and your protest will be duly entered in the minutes," said the chairman, and so the sitting was dissolved.

The attendance at the electrocution was a very small one. We four members of the committee were, of course, present with the executioner, who was to act under their orders. The others were the United States Marshal, the governor of the gaol, the chaplain, and three members of the press. The room was a small brick chamber, forming an out-house to the Central Electrical station. It had been used as a laundry, and had an oven and copper at one side, but no other furniture save a single chair for the condemned man. A metal plate for his feet was placed in front of it, to which ran a thick, insulated wire. Above, another wire depended from the ceiling, which could be connected with a small metallic rod projecting from a cap which was to be placed upon his head. When this connection was established Duncan Warner's hour was come.

There was a solemn hush as we waited for the coming of the prisoner. The practical engineers looked a little pale, and fidgeted nervously with the wires. Even the hardened Marshal was ill at

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ease, for a mere hanging was one thing, and this blasting of flesh and blood a very different one. As to the pressmen, their faces were whiter than the sheets which lay before them. The only man who appeared to feel none of the influence of these preparations was the little German crank, who strolled from one to the other with a smile on his lips and mischief in his eyes. More than once he even went so far as to burst into a shout of laughter, until the chaplain sternly rebuked him for his ill-timed levity.

"How can you so far forget yourself, Mr. Stulpnagel," said he, "as to jest in the presence of death?"

But the German was quite unabashed.

"If I were in the presence of death I should not jest," said he, "but since I am not I may do what I choose."

This flippant reply was about to draw another and a sterner reproof from the chaplain, when the door was swung open and two warders entered leading Duncan Warner between them. He glanced round him with a set face, stepped resolutely forward, and seated himself upon the chair.

"Touch her off!" said he.

It was barbarous to keep him in suspense. The chaplain murmured a few words in his ear, the attendant placed the cap upon his head, and then, while we all held our breath, the wire and the metal were brought in contact.

"Great Scott!" shouted Duncan Warner.

He had bounded in his chair as the frightful shock crashed through his system. But he was not dead. On the contrary, his eyes gleamed far more brightly than they had done before. There



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was only one change, but it was a singular one. The black had passed from his hair and beard as the shadow passes from a landscape. They were both as white as snow. And yet there was no other sign of decay. His skin was smooth and plump and lustrous as a child's.

The Marshal looked at the committee with a reproachful eye.

"There seems to be some hitch here, gentlemen," said he.

We three practical men looked at each other.

Peter Stulpnagel smiled pensively.

"I think that another one should do it," said I.

Again the connection was made, and again Duncan Warner sprang in his chair and shouted, but, indeed, were it not that he still remained in the chair none of us would have recognised him. His hair and his beard had shredded off in an instant, and the room looked like a barber's shop on a Saturday night. There he sat, his eyes still shining, his skin radiant with the glow of perfect health, but with a scalp as bald as a Dutch cheese, and a chin without so much as a trace of down. He began to revolve one of his arms, slowly and doubtfully at first, but with more confidence as he went on.

"That jint," said he, "has puzzled half the doctors on the Pacific Slope. It's as good as new, and as limber as a hickory twig."

"You are feeling pretty well?" asked the old German.

"Never better in my life," said Duncan Warner cheerily.

The situation was a painful one. The Marshal glared at the committee. Peter Stulpnagel grinned

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and rubbed his hands. The engineers scratched their heads. The bald-headed prisoner revolved his arm and looked pleased.

"I think that one more shock—" began the chairman.

"No, sir," said the Marshal; "we've had foolery enough for one morning. We are here for an execution, and an execution we'll have."

"What do you propose?"

"There's a hook handy upon the ceiling. Fetch in a rope, and we'll soon set this matter straight."

There was another awkward delay while the warders departed for the cord. Peter Stulpnagel bent over Duncan Warner, and whispered something in his ear. The desperado started in surprise.

"You don't say?" he asked.

The German nodded.

"What! No ways?"

Peter shook his head, and the two began to laugh as though they shared some huge joke between them.

The rope was brought, and the Marshal himself slipped the noose over the criminal's neck. Then the two warders, the assistant and he swung their victim into the air. For half an hour he hung—a dreadful sight—from the ceiling. Then in solemn silence they lowered him down, and one of the warders went out to order the shell to be brought round. But as he touched ground again what was our amazement when Duncan Warner put his hands up to his neck, loosened the noose, and took a long, deep breath.

"Paul Jefferson's sale is goin' well," he remarked, "I could see the crowd from up yonder," and he nodded at the hook in the ceiling.

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"Up with him again!" shouted the Marshal, "we'll get the life out of him somehow."

In an instant the victim was up at the hook once more.

They kept him there for an hour, but when he came down he was perfectly garrulous.

"Old man Plunket goes too much to the Arcady Saloon," said he. "Three times he's been there in an hour; and him with a family. Old man Plunket would do well to swear off."

It was monstrous and incredible, but there it was. There was no getting round it. The man was there talking when he ought to have been dead. We all sat staring in amazement, but United States Marshal Carpenter was not a man to be euchred so easily. He motioned the others to one side, so that the prisoner was left standing alone.

"Duncan Warner," said he, slowly, "you are here to play your part, and I am here to play mine. Your game is to live if you can, and my game is to carry out the sentence of the law. You've beat us on electricity. I'll give you one there. And you've beat us on hanging, for you seem to thrive on it. But it's my turn to beat you now, for my duty has to be done."

He pulled a six-shooter from his coat as he spoke, and fired all the shots through the body of the prisoner. The room was so filled with smoke that we could see nothing, but when it cleared the prisoner was still standing there, looking down in disgust at the front of his coat.

"Coats must be cheap where you come from," said he. "Thirty dollars it cost me, and look at it now. The six holes in front are bad enough,

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but four of the balls have passed out, and a pretty state the back must be in."

The Marshal's revolver fell from his hand, and he dropped his arms to his sides, a beaten man.

"Maybe some of you gentlemen can tell me what this means," said he, looking helplessly at the committee.

Peter Stulpnagel took a step forward.

"I'll tell you all about it," said he.

"You seem to be the only person who knows anything."

"I *am* the only person who knows anything. I should have warned these gentlemen; but, as they would not listen to me, I have allowed them to learn by experience. What you have done with your electricity is that you have increased this man's vitality until he can defy death for centuries."

"Centuries!"

"Yes, it will take the wear of hundreds of years to exhaust the enormous nervous energy with which you have drenched him. Electricity is life, and you have charged him with it to the utmost. Perhaps in fifty years you might execute him, but I am not sanguine about it."

"Great Scott! What shall I do with him?" cried the unhappy Marshal.

Peter Stulpnagel shrugged his shoulders.

"It seems to me that it does not much matter what you do with him now," said he.

"Maybe we could drain the electricity out of him again. Suppose we hang him up by the heels?"

"No, no, it's out of the question."

"Well, well, he shall do no more mischief in Los

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Amigos, anyhow," said the Marshal, with decision. "He shall go into the new gaol. The prison will wear him out."

"On the contrary," said Peter Stulpnagel, "I think that it is much more probable that he will wear out the prison."

It was rather a fiasco, and for years we didn't talk more about it than we could help, but it's no secret now, and I thought you might like to jot down the facts in your case-book.

## THE DOCTORS OF HOYLAND

DR. JAMES RIPLEY was always looked upon as an exceedingly lucky dog by all of the profession who knew him. His father had preceded him in a practice in the village of Hoyland, in the north of Hampshire, and all was ready for him on the very first day that the law allowed him to put his name at the foot of a prescription. In a few years the old gentleman retired, and settled on the South Coast, leaving his son in undisputed possession of the whole country-side. Save for Dr. Horton, near Basingstoke, the young surgeon had a clear run of six miles in every direction, and took his fifteen hundred pounds a year, though, as is usual in country practices, the stable swallowed up most of what the consulting-room earned.

Dr. James Ripley was two-and-thirty years of age, reserved, learned, unmarried, with set, rather stern features, and a thinning of the dark hair upon the top of his head, which was worth quite a hundred a year to him. He was particularly happy in his management of ladies. He had caught the tone of bland sternness and decisive suavity which dominates without offending. Ladies, however, were not equally happy in their management of him. Professionally, he was always at their service. Socially, he was a drop of quicksilver. In vain the country mammas spread out their simple lures in front of him. Dances and picnics were not to his taste, and he preferred during his scanty leisure to

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shut himself up in his study, and to bury himself in Virchow's Archives and the professional journals.

Study was a passion with him, and he would have none of the rust which often gathers round a country practitioner. It was his ambition to keep his knowledge as fresh and bright as at the moment when he had stepped out of the examination hall. He prided himself on being able at a moment's notice to rattle off the seven ramifications of some obscure artery, or to give the exact percentage of any physiological compound. After a long day's work he would sit up half the night performing iridectomies and extractions upon the sheep's eyes sent in by the village butcher, to the horror of his housekeeper, who had to remove the *débris* next morning. His love for his work was the one fanaticism which found a place in his dry, precise nature.

It was the more to his credit that he should keep up to date in his knowledge, since he had no competition to force him to exertion. In the seven years during which he had practised in Hoyland three rivals had pitted themselves against him, two in the village itself and one in the neighbouring hamlet of Lower Hoyland. Of these one had sickened and wasted, being, as it was said, himself the only patient whom he had treated during his eighteen months of ruralising. A second had bought a fourth share of a Basingstoke practice, and had departed honourably, while a third had vanished one September night, leaving a gutted house and an unpaid drug bill behind him. Since then the district had become a monopoly, and no one had dared to measure himself against the established fame of the Hoyland doctor.

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It was, then, with a feeling of some surprise and considerable curiosity that on driving through Lower Hoyland one morning he perceived that the new house at the end of the village was occupied, and that a virgin brass plate glistened upon the swinging gate which faced the high road. He pulled up his fifty guinea chestnut mare and took a good look at it. "Verrinder Smith, M.D.," was printed across it in very neat, small lettering. The last man had had letters half a foot long, with a lamp like a fire-station. Dr. James Ripley noted the difference, and deduced from it that the new-comer might possibly prove a more formidable opponent. He was convinced of it that evening when he came to consult the current medical directory. By it he learned that Dr. Verrinder Smith was the holder of superb degrees, that he had studied with distinction at Edinburgh, Paris, Berlin and Vienna, and finally that he had been awarded a gold medal and the Lee Hopkins scholarship for original research, in recognition of an exhaustive inquiry into the functions of the anterior spinal nerve roots. Dr. Ripley passed his fingers through his thin hair in bewilderment as he read his rival's record. What on earth could so brilliant a man mean by putting up his plate in a little Hampshire hamlet?

But Dr. Ripley furnished himself with an explanation to the riddle. No doubt Dr. Verrinder Smith had simply come down there in order to pursue some scientific research in peace and quiet. The plate was up as an address rather than as an invitation to patients. Of course, that must be the true explanation. In that case the presence of this brilliant neighbour would be a splendid thing for



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his own studies. He had often longed for some kindred mind, some steel on which he might strike his flint. Chance had brought it to him, and he rejoiced exceedingly.

And this joy it was which led him to take a step which was quite at variance with his usual habits. It is the custom for a new-comer among medical men to call first upon the older, and the etiquette upon the subject is strict. Dr. Ripley was pedantically exact on such points, and yet he deliberately drove over next day and called upon Dr. Verrinder Smith. Such a waiving of ceremony was, he felt, a gracious act upon his part, and a fit prelude to the intimate relations which he hoped to establish with his neighbour.

The house was neat and well appointed, and Dr. Ripley was shown by a smart maid into a dapper little consulting-room. As he passed in he noticed two or three parasols and a lady's sun-bonnet hanging in the hall. It was a pity that his colleague should be a married man. It would put them upon a different footing, and interfere with those long evenings of high scientific talk which he had pictured to himself. On the other hand, there was much in the consulting-room to please him. Elaborate instruments, seen more often in hospitals than in the houses of private practitioners, were scattered about. A sphygmograph stood upon the table and a gasometer-like engine, which was new to Dr. Ripley, in the corner. A book-case full of ponderous volumes in French and German, paper-covered for the most part, and varying in tint from the shell to the yolk of a duck's egg, caught his wandering eyes, and he was deeply absorbed in their titles when the door opened suddenly behind him.

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Turning round, he found himself facing a little woman, whose plain, palish face was remarkable only for a pair of shrewd, humorous eyes of a blue which had two shades too much green in it. She held a *pince-nez* in her left hand, and the doctor's card in her right.

"How do you do, Dr. Ripley?" said she.

"How do you do, madam?" returned the visitor. "Your husband is perhaps out?"

"I am not married," said she simply.

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I meant the doctor—Dr. Verrinder Smith."

"I am Dr. Verrinder Smith."

Dr. Ripley was so surprised that he dropped his hat and forgot to pick it up again.

"What!" he gasped, "the Lee Hopkins prize-man! You!"

He had never seen a woman doctor before, and his whole conservative soul rose up in revolt at the idea. He could not recall any Biblical injunction that the man should remain ever the doctor and the woman the nurse, and yet he felt as if a blasphemy had been committed. His face betrayed his feelings only too clearly.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said the lady drily.

"You certainly have surprised me," he answered, picking up his hat.

"You are not among our champions, then?"

"I cannot say that the movement has my approval."

"And why?"

"I should much prefer not to discuss it."

"But I am sure you will answer a lady's question."

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"Ladies are in danger of losing their privileges when they usurp the place of the other sex. They cannot claim both."

"Why should a woman not earn her bread by her brains?"

Dr. Ripley felt irritated by the quiet manner in which the lady cross-questioned him.

"I should much prefer not to be led into a discussion, Miss Smith."

"Dr. Smith," she interrupted.

"Well, Dr. Smith! But if you insist upon an answer, I must say that I do not think medicine a suitable profession for women and that I have a personal objection to masculine ladies."

It was an exceedingly rude speech, and he was ashamed of it the instant after he had made it. The lady, however, simply raised her eye-brows and smiled.

"It seems to me that you are begging the question," said she. "Of course, if it makes women masculine that *would* be a considerable deterioration."

It was a neat little counter, and Dr. Ripley, like a pinked fencer, bowed his acknowledgment.

"I must go," said he.

"I am sorry that we cannot come to some more friendly conclusion since we are to be neighbours," she remarked.

He bowed again, and took a step toward the door.

"It was a singular coincidence," she continued, "that at the instant that you called I was reading your paper on 'Locomotor Ataxia,' in the *Lancet*."

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"Indeed," said he drily.

"I thought it was a very able monograph."

"You are very good."

"But the views which you attribute to Professor Pitres, of Bordeaux, have been repudiated by him."

"I have his pamphlet of 1890," said Dr. Ripley angrily.

"Here is his pamphlet of 1891." She picked it from among a litter of periodicals. "If you have time to glance your eye down this passage——"

Dr. Ripley took it from her and shot rapidly through the paragraph which she indicated. There was no denying that it completely knocked the bottom out of his own article. He threw it down, and with another frigid bow he made for the door. As he took the reins from the groom he glanced round and saw that the lady was standing at her window, and it seemed to him that she was laughing heartily.

All day the memory of this interview haunted him. He felt that he had come very badly out of it. She had shown herself to be his superior on his own pet subject. She had been courteous while he had been rude, self-possessed when he had been angry. And then, above all, there was her presence, her monstrous intrusion to rankle in his mind. A woman doctor had been an abstract thing before, repugnant but distant. Now she was there in actual practice, with a brass plate up just like his own, competing for the same patients. Not that he feared competition, but he objected to this lowering of his ideal of womanhood. She could not be more than thirty, and had a bright, mobile face, too. He thought of her humorous

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eyes, and of her strong, well-turned chin. It revolted him the more to recall the details of her education. A man, of course, could come through such an ordeal with all his purity, but it was nothing short of shameless in a woman.

But it was not long before he learned that even her competition was a thing to be feared. The novelty of her presence had brought a few curious invalids into her consulting-rooms, and, once there, they had been so impressed by the firmness of her manner and by the singular, new-fashioned instruments with which she tapped, and peered, and sounded, that it formed the core of their conversation for weeks afterward. And soon there were tangible proofs of her powers upon the countryside. Farmer Eyton, whose callous ulcer had been quietly spreading over his shin for years back under a gentle *régime* of zinc ointment, was painted round with blistering fluid, and found, after three blasphemous nights, that his sore was stimulated into healing. Mrs. Crowder, who had always regarded the birth-mark upon her second daughter Eliza as a sign of the indignation of the Creator at a third helping of raspberry tart which she had partaken of during a critical period, learned that, with the help of two galvanic needles, the mischief was not irreparable. In a month Dr. Verrinder Smith was known, and in two she was famous.

Occasionally, Dr. Ripley met her as he drove upon his rounds. She had started a high dog-cart, taking the reins herself, with a little tiger behind. When they met he invariably raised his hat with punctilious politeness, but the grim severity of his face showed how formal was the courtesy. In fact, his dislike was rapidly deepening into absolute de-

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testation. "The unsexed woman," was the description of her which he permitted himself to give to those of his patients who still remained stanch. But, indeed, they were a rapidly-decreasing body, and every day his pride was galled by the news of some fresh defection. The lady had somehow impressed the country folk with almost superstitious belief in her power, and from far and near they flocked to her consulting-room.

But what galled him most of all was, when she did something which he had pronounced to be impracticable. For all his knowledge he lacked nerve as an operator, and usually sent his worst cases up to London. The lady, however, had no weakness of the sort, and took everything that came in her way. It was agony to him to hear that she was about to straighten little Alec Turner's club foot, and right at the fringe of the rumour came a note from his mother, the rector's wife, asking him if he would be so good as to act as chloroformist. It would be inhumanity to refuse, as there was no other who could take the place, but it was gall and wormwood to his sensitive nature. Yet, in spite of his vexation, he could not but admire the dexterity with which the thing was done. She handled the little wax-like foot so gently, and held the tiny tenotomy knife as an artist holds his pencil. One straight insertion, one snick of a tendon, and it was all over without a stain upon the white towel which lay beneath. He had never seen anything more masterly, and he had the honesty to say so, though her skill increased his dislike of her. The operation spread her fame still further at his expense, and self-preservation was added to his other grounds for detesting her. And this very

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detestation it was which brought matters to a curious climax.

One winter's night, just as he was rising from his lonely dinner, a groom came riding down from Squire Faircastle's, the richest man in the district, to say that his daughter had scalded her hand, and that medical help was needed on the instant. The coachman had ridden for the lady doctor, for it mattered nothing to the Squire who came as long as it were speedily. Dr. Ripley rushed from his surgery with the determination that she should not effect an entrance into this stronghold of his if hard driving on his part could prevent it. He did not even wait to light his lamps, but sprang into his gig and flew off as fast as hoof could rattle. He lived rather nearer to the Squire's than she did, and was convinced that he could get there well before her.

And so he would but for that whimsical element of chance, which will forever muddle up the affairs of this world and dumfound the prophets. Whether it came from the want of his lights, or from his mind being full of the thoughts of his rival, he allowed too little by half a foot in taking the sharp turn upon the Basingstoke road. The empty trap and the frightened horse clattered away into the darkness, while the Squire's groom crawled out of the ditch into which he had been shot. He struck a match, looked down at his groaning companion, and then, after the fashion of rough, strong men when they see what they have not seen before, he was very sick.

The doctor raised himself a little on his elbow in the glint of the match. He caught a glimpse of something white and sharp bristling through his trouser leg half way down the shin.

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"Compound!" he groaned. "A three months' job," and fainted.

When he came to himself the groom was gone, for he had scudded off to the Squire's house for help, but a small page was holding a gig-lamp in front of his injured leg, and a woman, with an open case of polished instruments gleaming in the yellow light, was deftly slitting up his trouser with a crooked pair of scissors.

"It's all right, doctor," said she soothingly. "I am so sorry about it. You can have Dr. Horton to-morrow, but I am sure you will allow me to help you to-night. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you by the roadside."

"The groom has gone for help," groaned the sufferer.

"When it comes we can move you into the gig. A little more light, John! So! Ah, dear, dear, we shall have laceration unless we reduce this before we move you. Allow me to give you a whiff of chloroform, and I have no doubt that I can secure it sufficiently to——"

Dr. Ripley never heard the end of that sentence. He tried to raise a hand and to murmur something in protest, but a sweet smell was in his nostrils, and a sense of rich peace and lethargy stole over his jangled nerves. Down he sank, through clear, cool water, ever down and down into the green shadows beneath, gently, without effort, while the pleasant chiming of a great belfry rose and fell in his ears. Then he rose again, up and up, and ever up, with a terrible tightness about his temples, until at last he shot out of those green shadows and was in the light once more. Two bright, shining, golden spots gleamed before his dazed eyes. He blinked and



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blinked before he could give a name to them. They were only the two brass balls at the end posts of his bed, and he was lying in his own little room, with a head like a cannon ball, and a leg like an iron bar. Turning his eyes, he saw the calm face of Dr. Verrinder Smith looking down at him.

"Ah, at last!" said she. "I kept you under all the way home, for I knew how painful the jolting would be. It is in good position now with a strong side splint. I have ordered a morphia draught for you. Shall I tell your groom to ride for Dr. Horton in the morning?"

"I should prefer that you should continue the case," said Dr. Ripley feebly, and then, with a half hysterical laugh,—“You have all the rest of the parish as patients, you know, so you may as well make the thing complete by having me also.”

It was not a very gracious speech, but it was a look of pity and not of anger which shone in her eyes as she turned away from his bedside.

Dr. Ripley had a brother, William, who was assistant surgeon at a London hospital, and who was down in Hampshire within a few hours of his hearing of the accident. He raised his brows when he heard the details.

"What! You are pestered with one of those!" he cried.

"I don't know what I should have done without her."

"I've no doubt she's an excellent nurse."

"She knows her work as well as you or I."

"Speak for yourself, James," said the London man with a sniff. "But apart from that, you know that the principle of the thing is all wrong."

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"You think there is nothing to be said on the other side?"

"Good heavens! do you?"

"Well, I don't know. It struck me during the night that we may have been a little narrow in our views."

"Nonsense, James. It's all very fine for women to win prizes in the lecture room, but you know as well as I do that they are no use in an emergency. Now I warrant that this woman was all nerves when she was setting your leg. That reminds me that I had better just take a look at it and see that it is all right."

"I would rather that you did not undo it," said the patient. "I have her assurance that it is all right."

Brother William was deeply shocked.

"Of course, if a woman's assurance is of more value than the opinion of the assistant surgeon of a London hospital, there is nothing more to be said," he remarked.

"I should prefer that you did not touch it," said the patient firmly, and Dr. William went back to London that evening in a huff.

The lady, who had heard of his coming, was much surprised on learning of his departure.

"We had a difference upon a point of professional etiquette," said Dr. James, and it was all the explanation he would vouchsafe.

For two long months Dr. Ripley was brought in contact with his rival every day, and he learned many things which he had not known before. She was a charming companion, as well as a most assiduous doctor. Her short presence during the long, weary day was like a flower in a sand waste.

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What interested him was precisely what interested her, and she could meet him at every point upon equal terms. And yet under all her learning and her firmness ran a sweet, womanly nature, peeping out in her talk, shining in her greenish eyes, showing itself in a thousand subtle ways which the dull-est of men could read. And he, though a bit of a prig and a pedant, was by no means dull, and had honesty enough to confess when he was in the wrong.

"I don't know how to apologise to you," he said in his shame-faced fashion one day, when he had progressed so far as to be able to sit in an arm-chair with his leg upon another one; "I feel that I have been quite in the wrong."

"Why, then?"

"Over this woman question. I used to think that a woman must inevitably lose something of her charm if she took up such studies."

"Oh, you don't think they are necessarily unsexed, then?" she cried, with a mischievous smile.

"Please don't recall my idiotic expression."

"I feel so pleased that I should have helped in changing your views. I think that it is the most sincere compliment that I have ever had paid me."

"At any rate, it is the truth," said he, and was happy all night at the remembrance of the flush of pleasure which made her pale face look quite comely for the instant.

For, indeed, he was already far past the stage when he would acknowledge her as the equal of any other woman. Already he could not disguise from himself that she had become the one woman. Her dainty skill, her gentle touch, her sweet presence, the community of their tastes, had all united

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to hopelessly upset his previous opinions. It was a dark day for him now when his convalescence allowed her to miss a visit, and darker still that other one which he saw approaching when all occasion for her visits would be at an end. It came round at last, however, and he felt that his whole life's fortune would hang upon the issue of that final interview. He was a direct man by nature, so he laid his hand upon hers as it felt for his pulse, and he asked her if she would be his wife.

"What, and unite the practices?" said she.

He started in pain and anger.

"Surely you do not attribute any such base motive to me!" he cried. "I love you as unselfishly as ever a woman was loved."

"No, I was wrong. It was a foolish speech," said she, moving her chair a little back, and tapping her stethoscope upon her knee. "Forget that I ever said it. I am so sorry to cause you any disappointment, and I appreciate most highly the honour which you do me, but what you ask is quite impossible."

With another woman he might have urged the point, but his instincts told him that it was quite useless with this one. Her tone of voice was conclusive. He said nothing, but leaned back in his chair a stricken man.

"I am so sorry," she said again. "If I had known what was passing in your mind I should have told you earlier that I intend to devote my life entirely to science. There are many women with a capacity for marriage, but few with a taste for biology. I will remain true to my own line, then. I came down here while waiting for an opening in the Paris Physiological Laboratory. I

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have just heard that there is a vacancy for me there, and so you will be troubled no more by my intrusion upon your practice. I have done you an injustice just as you did me one. I thought you narrow and pedantic, with no good quality. I have learned during your illness to appreciate you better, and the recollection of our friendship will always be a very pleasant one to me."

And so it came about that in a very few weeks there was only one doctor in Hoyland. But folks noticed that the one had aged many years in a few months, that a weary sadness lurked always in the depths of his blue eyes, and that he was less concerned than ever with the eligible young ladies whom chance, or their careful country mammas, placed in his way.

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"MEN die of the diseases which they have studied most," remarked the surgeon, snipping off the end of a cigar with all his professional neatness and finish. "It's as if the morbid condition was an evil creature which, when it found itself closely hunted, flew at the throat of its pursuer. If you worry the microbes too much they may worry you. I've seen cases of it, and not necessarily in microbic diseases either. There was, of course, the well-known instance of Liston and the aneurism; and a dozen others that I could mention. You couldn't have a clearer case than that of poor old Walker of St. Christopher's. Not heard of it? Well, of course, it was a little before your time, but I wonder that it should have been forgotten. You youngsters are so busy keeping up to the day that you lose a good deal that is interesting of yesterday.

"Walker was one of the best men in Europe on nervous disease. You must have read his little book on sclerosis of the posterior columns. It's as interesting as a novel, and epoch-making in its way. He worked like a horse, did Walker—huge consulting practice—hours a day in the clinical wards—constant original investigations. And then he enjoyed himself also. '*De mortuis*,' of course, but still it's an open secret among all who knew him. If he died at forty-five, he crammed eighty years into it. The marvel was that he could have held on so long at the pace at which he was going. But he took it beautifully when it came.

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"I was his clinical assistant at the time. Walker was lecturing on locomotor ataxia to a wardful of youngsters. He was explaining that one of the early signs of the complaint was that the patient could not put his heels together with his eyes shut without staggering. As he spoke, he suited the action to the word. I don't suppose the boys noticed anything. I did, and so did he, though he finished his lecture without a sign.

"When it was over he came into my room and lit a cigarette.

" 'Just run over my reflexes, Smith,' said he.

"There was hardly a trace of them left. I tapped away at his knee-tendon and might as well have tried to get a jerk out of that sofa-cushion. He stood with his eyes shut again, and he swayed like a bush in the wind.

" 'So,' said he, 'it was not intercostal neuralgia after all.'

"Then I knew that he had had the lightning pains, and that the case was complete. There was nothing to say, so I sat looking at him while he puffed and puffed at the cigarette. Here he was, a man in the prime of life, one of the handsomest men in London, with money, fame, social success, everything at his feet, and now, without a moment's warning, he was told that inevitable death lay before him, a death accompanied by more refined and lingering tortures than if he were bound upon a Red Indian stake. He sat in the middle of the blue cigarette cloud with his eyes cast down, and the slightest little tightening of his lips. Then he rose with a motion of his arms, as one who throws off old thoughts and enters upon a new course.

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“‘Better put this thing straight at once,’ said he. ‘I must make some fresh arrangements. May I use your paper and envelopes?’”

“He settled himself at my desk and he wrote half a dozen letters. It is not a breach of confidence to say that they were not addressed to his professional brothers. Walker was a single man, which means that he was not restricted to a single woman. When he had finished, he walked out of that little room of mine, leaving every hope and ambition of his life behind him. And he might have had another year of ignorance and peace if it had not been for the chance illustration in his lecture.

“It took five years to kill him, and he stood it well. If he had ever been a little irregular he atoned for it in that long martyrdom. He kept an admirable record of his own symptoms, and worked out the eye changes more fully than has ever been done. When the ptosis got very bad he would hold his eyelid up with one hand while he wrote. Then, when he could not co-ordinate his muscles to write, he dictated to his nurse. So died, in the odour of science, James Walker, æt. 45.

“Poor old Walker was very fond of experimental surgery, and he broke ground in several directions. Between ourselves, there may have been some more ground-breaking afterward, but he did his best for his cases. You know M’Namara, don’t you? He always wears his hair long. He lets it be understood that it comes from his artistic strain, but it is really to conceal the loss of one of his ears. Walker cut the other one off, but you must not tell Mac I said so.

“It was like this. Walker had a fad about the portio dura—the motor to the face, you know—



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and he thought paralysis of it came from a disturbance of the blood supply. Something else which counterbalanced that disturbance might, he thought, set it right again. We had a very obstinate case of Bell's paralysis in the wards, and had tried it with every conceivable thing, blistering, tonics, nerve-stretching, galvanism, needles, but all without result. Walker got it into his head that removal of the ear would increase the blood supply to the part, and he very soon gained the consent of the patient to the operation.

"Well, we did it at night. Walker, of course, felt that it was something of an experiment, and did not wish too much talk about it unless it proved successful. There were half-a-dozen of us there, M'Namara and I among the rest. The room was a small one, and in the centre was the narrow table, with a mackintosh over the pillow, and a blanket which extended almost to the floor on either side. Two candles, on a side table near the pillow, supplied all the light. In came the patient, with one side of his face as smooth as a baby's, and the other all in a quiver with fright. He lay down, and the chloroform towel was placed over his face, while Walker threaded his needles in the candle light. The chloroformist stood at the head of the table, and M'Namara was stationed at the side to control the patient. The rest of us stood by to assist.

"Well, the man was about half over when he fell into one of those convulsive flurries which come with the semi-unconscious stage. He kicked and plunged and struck out with both hands. Over with a crash went the little table which held the candles, and in an instant we were left in total darkness. You can think what a rush and a scurry

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there was, one to pick up the table, one to find the matches, and some to restrain the patient who was still dashing himself about. He was held down by two dressers, the chloroform was pushed, and by the time the candles were relit, his incoherent, half-smothered shoutings had changed to a stertorous snore. His head was turned on the pillow and the towel was still kept over his face while the operation was carried through. Then the towel was withdrawn, and you can conceive our amazement when we looked upon the face of M'Namara.

"How did it happen? Why, simply enough. As the candles went over, the chloroformist had stopped for an instant and had tried to catch them. The patient, just as the light went out, had rolled off and under the table. Poor M'Namara, clinging frantically to him, had been dragged across it, and the chloroformist, feeling him there, had naturally clapped the towel across his mouth and nose. The others had secured him, and the more he roared and kicked the more they drenched him with chloroform. Walker was very nice about it, and made the most handsome apologies. He offered to do a plastic on the spot, and make as good an ear as he could, but M'Namara had had enough of it. As to the patient, we found him sleeping placidly under the table, with the ends of the blanket screening him on both sides. Walker sent M'Namara round his ear next day in a jar of methylated spirit, but Mac's wife was very angry about it, and it led to a good deal of ill-feeling.

"Some people say that the more one has to do with human nature, and the closer one is brought in contact with it, the less one thinks of it. I don't believe that those who know most would uphold that view. My own experience is dead against it.

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I was brought up in the miserable-mortal-clay school of theology, and yet here I am, after thirty years of intimate acquaintance with humanity, filled with respect for it. The evil lies commonly upon the surface. The deeper strata are good. A hundred times I have seen folk condemned to death as suddenly as poor Walker was. Sometimes it was to blindness or to mutilations which are worse than death. Men and women, they almost all took it beautifully, and some with such lovely unselfishness, and with such complete absorption in the thought of how their fate would affect others, that the man about town, or the frivolously-dressed woman has seemed to change into an angel before my eyes. I have seen death-beds, too, of all ages and of all creeds and want of creeds. I never saw any of them shrink, save only one poor, imaginative young fellow, who had spent his blameless life in the strictest of sects. Of course, an exhausted frame is incapable of fear, as anyone can vouch who is told, in the midst of his sea-sickness, that the ship is going to the bottom. That is why I rate courage in the face of mutilation to be higher than courage when a wasting illness is fining away into death.

"Now, I'll take a case which I had in my own practice last Wednesday. A lady came in to consult me—the wife of a well-known sporting baronet. The husband had come with her, but remained, at her request, in the waiting-room. I need not go into details, but it proved to be a peculiarly malignant case of cancer. 'I knew it,' said she. 'How long have I to live?' 'I fear that it may exhaust your strength in a few months,' I answered. 'Poor old Jack!' said she. 'I'll tell him that it is not dangerous.' 'Why should you deceive him?' I

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asked. 'Well, he's very uneasy about it, and he is quaking now in the waiting-room. He has two old friends to dinner to-night, and I haven't the heart to spoil his evening. To-morrow will be time enough for him to learn the truth.' Out she walked, the brave little woman, and a moment later her husband, with his big, red face shining with joy, came plunging into my room to shake me by the hand. No, I respected her wish and I did not undeceive him. I dare bet that evening was one of the brightest, and the next morning the darkest, of his life.

"It's wonderful how bravely and cheerily a woman can face a crushing blow. It is different with men. A man can stand it without complaining, but it knocks him dazed and silly all the same. But the woman does not lose her wits any more than she does her courage. Now, I had a case only a few weeks ago which would show you what I mean. A gentleman consulted me about his wife, a very beautiful woman. She had a small tubercular nodule upon her upper arm, according to him. He was sure that it was of no importance, but he wanted to know whether Devonshire or the Riviera would be the better for her. I examined her and found a frightful sarcoma of the bone, hardly showing upon the surface, but involving the shoulder-blade and clavicle as well as the humerus. A more malignant case I have never seen. I sent her out of the room and I told him the truth. What did he do? Why, he walked slowly round that room with his hands behind his back, looking with the greatest interest at the pictures. I can see him now, putting up his gold *pince-nez* and staring at them with perfectly vacant eyes, which told me that he saw neither them nor the wall be-

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hind them. 'Amputation of the arm?' he asked at last. 'And of the collar-bone and shoulder-blade,' said I. 'Quite so. The collar-bone and shoulder-blade,' he repeated, still staring about him with those lifeless eyes. It settled him. I don't believe he'll ever be the same man again. But the woman took it as bravely and brightly as could be, and she has done very well since. No, I don't think that there will be any return, and I have every hope of her recovery.

"The first patient is a thing which one remembers all one's life. Mine was commonplace, and the details are of no interest. I had a curious visitor, however, during the first few months after my plate went up. It was an elderly woman, richly dressed, with a wicker-work picnic basket in her hand. This she opened with the tears streaming down her face, and out there waddled the fattest, ugliest and mangiest little pug dog that I have ever seen. 'I wish you to put him painlessly out of the world, doctor,' she cried. 'Quick, quick, or my resolution may give way.' She flung herself down, with hysterical sobs, upon the sofa. The less experienced a doctor is, the higher are his notions of professional dignity, as I need not remind you, my young friend, so I was about to refuse the commission with indignation, when I bethought me that, quite apart from medicine, we were gentleman and lady, and that she had asked me to do something for her which was evidently of the greatest possible importance in her eyes. I led off the poor little doggie, therefore, and with the help of a saucerful of milk and a few drops of prussic acid his exit was as speedy and painless as could be desired. 'Is it over?' she cried as I entered. It was really tragic to see how all the love